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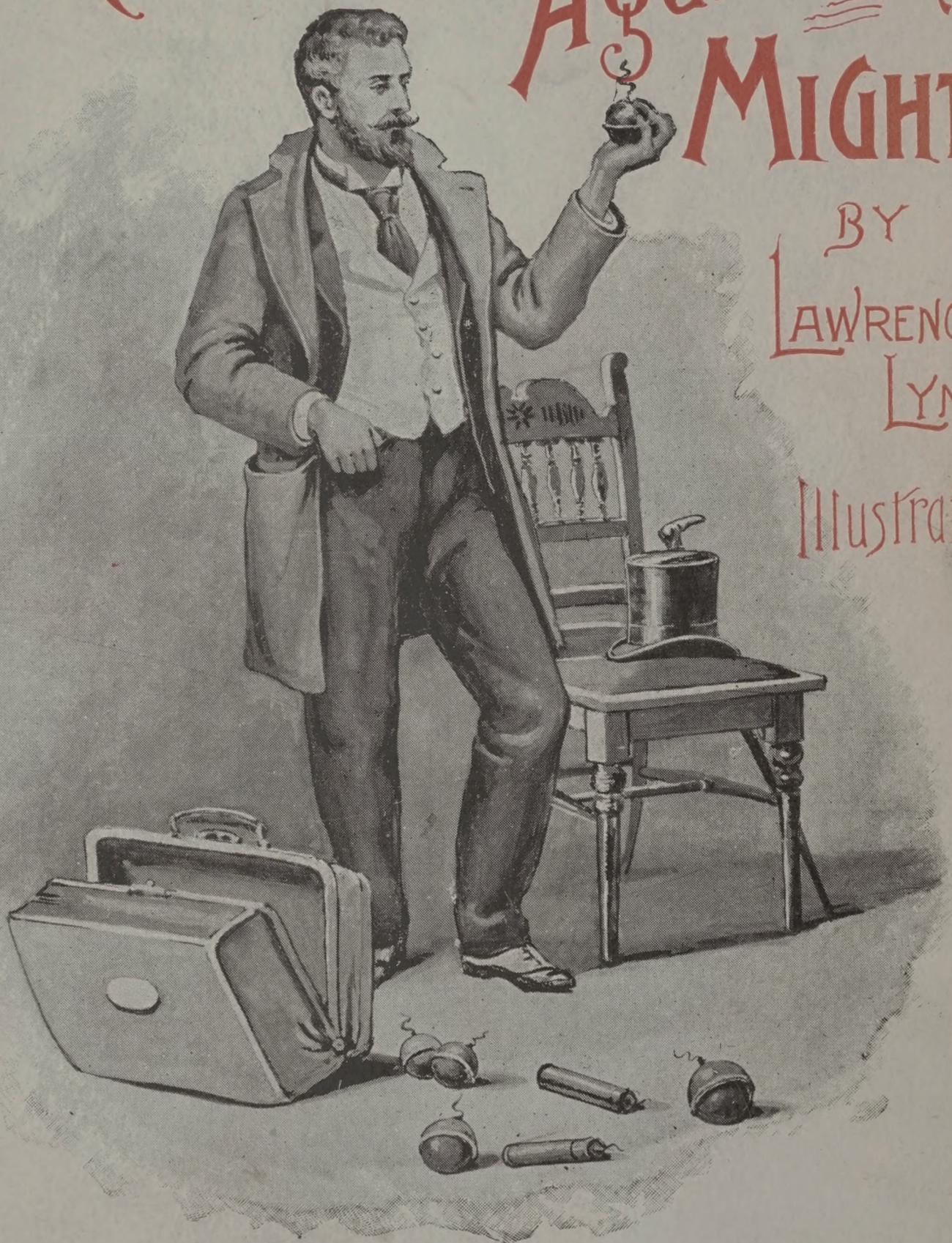
Moina -or- Against the Mighty

BY

LAWRENCE L. LYNCH

Illustrated.



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35

MOINA

OR

AGAINST THE MIGHTY

"MADAME," SAID DREXEL, "I COME FROM THE CHIEF OF POLICE."

MOINA

OR

AGAINST THE MIGHTY

BY

Lawrence L. Lynch

Author of "Shadowed by Three," "Madeline Payne," "The Lost Witness," "The Diamond Coterie," "Dangerous Ground," "Out of the Labyrinth," etc, etc

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MOINA

CHAPTER I

THE LETTER AND THE KNIFE

"Eh, what's this? Oh, there you are, eh?"

For answer only a sharp click. It seems to stimulate the speaker, and he puts out a hand and snatches up a revolver that has lain ready on a table beside the bed.

The situation is not a common one, neither is it so uncommon as many easy-going people would like to believe. A bed-chamber, large and luxurious; in the middle of the room a bed, in which a man sits very straight, with rumpled hair and night-shirt awry. Close beside the bed, another man—large and muscular, one can see at a glance. His garb a coarse homespun; his face hidden behind a blue silk handkerchief, with holes cut through where the eyes look out, but with no opening for the mouth—one can breathe easily enough through that thin fabric, and it serves to muffle and change the voice wonderfuly well. Over the blue handkerchief a close-fitting silk cap is pulled down. The hands are gloved in coarse cotton, and one of them holds a big pistol pointed suggestively at the head of the occupant of the canopied bed, while the other puts a dark-lantern down upon the coverings at the bed's foot, while he says coolly:

"Better look at this gun before you make much fuss. What do you take me for?"

"Umph!" grunts the occupant of the bed. "For a burglar, of course, and a confounded impudent one." And then, as he turns his attention to the weapon in his own hand, "Curse you! you've emptied my revolver!" His eyes blaze with anger. Then he turns sharply upon his nocturnal visitor. "Well, what have you stolen?"

The man in the mask started perceptibly. "Stolen!" Then with a drop of the voice, "Oh, nothing yet."

"Nothing! Well, why don't you begin?"

Then suddenly he sprang from the bed with the revolver clubbed in his hand. The movement overthrew the burglar's lantern, and the fellow drew back a pace, stooping to catch it as it fell.

Then there was a blow, a fall, and the two men were rolling upon the floor in a fierce struggle. Presently the grasp of one of them relaxed and he lay upon his back, gasping under the strong hand of the other, who knelt above him grim as fate.

"Look here," said the champion, "I don't want to kill you, old man. But if you don't stop this you'll force me to it."

No answer; only the gleam of angry eyes and an ineffectual struggle. Then, as he fell back, "Do you think," he panted, "that I'll stand aside and see myself robbed?"

The burglar uttered an oath, and put one hand to his head, which was aching dizzily from the blow dealt by the clubbed pistol.

"I think you're a guilty old fool," he muttered, looking about him uneasily in the semi-darkness, putting out his hand to draw the dark-lantern toward him, taking care to turn the open side upon the face of his captive and

THE MAN IN THE MASK STARTED PERCEPTIBLY.—Moina, p. 10.

away from the bed. Afterward the assailed man recalled the act.

For a moment the two men were silent, each peering at the other. The blue handkerchief had been loosened in the struggle, and the fellow fingered it uneasily, keeping the other hand firm upon the old man's throat.

"What will you do if I let ye up?" he said, at last.

"Protect my property," was the prompt reply.

The unoccupied hand of the burglar brought into view the threatening revolver.

"Look!" he said; "I could make a finish of you in half a minute with this, clean out the house, and get off safe. You know that. You're alone in this house. I might fire off this pistol half a dozen times, and it wouldn't be heard outside through these thick stone walls. I might 'a' gutted yer old plate-pantry instead of comin' here first. I might 'a' drugged ye if I hadn't been too confounded sure that ye was sound asleep. But I didn't, and here we are. You hain't lost nothing, and I hain't made nothing yet. Now, I'll tell ye what I'll do. You've give me a hurt, I'll admit; and I want to get where I can 'tend to it."

"Before it gets so big that we can identify you by it, eh?"

"Ye can say that if ye like. The question's this: Will ye stay right here fer a good twenty minutes and give me ye's promise not to try any dodge to give the alarm while I get away?"

"And if I won't?"

Click! spoke the weapon in the burglar's hand.

"I can't stop to parley. If you won't you won't. You'll stay here just the same, only you'll stay so long that you won't know when you got up. Come, one way or the other—which is it?"

During this harangue Elias Lord had found time to

think, and he now said, without any sign of fear, "I'll stay!"

The burglar shifted the bull's-eye until it shone upon a little bronze clock upon the wall.

"It's just half-past one," he said. "Does the thing strike the hour?"

"Yes."

"Well, when it strikes two you may get up and be your own master. Sorry to leave you like this, but I'll come again, perhaps."

"Do," said the old man grimly. "I'll be ready for you."

Elias Lord was not the man to break his word, even when it was extorted by a burglar, and he lay upon the floor almost motionless while long minutes ticked away. The room was now in total darkness, and he could do nothing but think.

What a fool he had been to stay in that great house alone! Why had he not a burglar-alarm? One thing was certain: he would be ready for the next visitor of that sort. he would see that nothing was lacking that could make his house secure.

Tick! tick! How slowly the time went! It was not for his plate that he cared so much; and as for money—well, he would be a fool to have much money about him. But those papers—if they had been stolen! Well, he had learned another lesson. He would have one of those tiny safes, just such another as was in his private office, let into the wall of his bedroom.

Tick! tick! tick! Would that clock ever strike? How like a fool he must look lying there in the dark, and his bed not two feet distant! He was getting chilly too.

After all, had he not taken the wisest course? If Mrs. Ralston and Madeline Payne were to hear of this, would

they not fear to make his house their home? What would they say if they were greeted with such a tale?

Tick! tick! He forgot about the time while he thought of the changes these two women would bring into his home, if only they could be prevailed upon to come. It had been a home to Mrs. Ralston when his wife was its mistress, and now that these two, his wife's cousin and the fine young woman who had been her companion for more than two years, were returning to New York, why should they not come to him?

They must live somewhere. They had asked him to find them a suitable house. For more than a year, ever since his wife's death, this great house had been closed. He had lived in it almost alone. Yes; he would open the house at once. He would fill it with servants, refurnish, repair. It should be ready for them.

"One, two," said the clock.

He was on his feet in an instant. He groped his way to the mantel, found a match, lighted the gas, and dressed. He was really chilled, and he hastened to touch another match to the fuel that laid ready in the open grate.

As it began to crackle and blaze and send forth a ruddy glow, he stood before it stretching himself and enjoying its warmth.

"I think I'll look about a bit," he muttered.

What is it that salutes his gaze, and holds it, as he stands facing the bed? Something white and something coldly glittering. He goes toward it slowly, as if fascinated. He pauses by the side of the bed and looks and looks.

"Great heavens!"

He sits down weakly upon the bedside, and still stares at the thing that glitters in the wood just above the pillow. Was his visitor a burglar, after all?

Presently he puts up a hand and touches the gleaming thing. It quivers and vibrates. The touch displaces it, and he holds a long, keen, slender dagger, while the letter which it had pinned to the carved board above his sleeping head falls and lies before his startled eyes upon the pillow. So this was the true mission of the man whom he had mistaken for a mere burglar!

Mechanically he lifts the dagger, examines its keen edge, its slender hilt. Ruthlessly he tests it upon the polished wood of the bed's head. How it cuts its way! How pliant it is! how strong!

Since his wife's death these splendid rooms have been closed—all save his own apartments, the dining-room and library—and it has been his habit to breakfast down town, to lunch wherever it happened, and to dine and sleep in his own home.

His cook and house-maid, the only servants he had retained, had asked and easily obtained permission to sleep at their homes, going at night and returning about midday.

"How clearly I see it now!" he mused. "That man had no designs upon my valuables; and he had no wish to take my life. Why then did he risk his own safety, merely to place this letter in my room? Evidently it was to prove to me how entirely I was at his mercy, had he chosen to strike—how easy it will be to put an end to me at his pleasure. I realize now the gravity of the step I have taken; but it is taken. I shall not draw back; I could not if I would."

He put out his hand and took up the letter. Every word stood out in characters that were as plain as print, and the words were few:

"ELIAS LORD—*Sir:* As the head of a new league for the oppression of the poor and the upholding of the rich, it is

in your power to say how far these oppressions shall go. Be warned in time. Use your authority wisely. Pay careful heed to this note of warning. Let it prove that you cannot escape us. Use your power to help us, and live. Harm us, and your last hour follows the deed. Our eyes are ever upon you. We never sleep."

There was no signature. The strange document was written upon a plain square of white paper, and in a copy-book hand that was as characterless as print.

Having read it, Elias Lord pondered long. He knew what this ghastly warning meant, and had no intention to treat it other than seriously. Sitting there, with the letter in his hand and the gleaming dagger before him, what he thought was substantially this:

"Here am I, Elias Lord, with a goodly fortune, which I have won by my own industry and energy, with large interests in factories, and workshops, and foundries. Against me is a great faction of disappointed laborers, and of rascals who won't labor, who have leagued together to extort money from me, not because they have a right to it, but because I have it and they want it. They've been fighting me, and others like me, for years. And now, when I am finally driven in self-defense to take a stand against them, when I have allied myself to a society which promises me and my property protection, they come with a deadly threat.

"That the enemy is strong, and has its emissaries everywhere, is proved by their knowledge of the fact that I am an officer of the new league before I have been such three days.

"So it is to be war, then—war between myself, single-handed but forewarned, and an unknown enemy. Very good. I have wronged none of them. I owe no man anything. I will fight for my own. Let them do their worst"!

CHAPTER II

SPIDER AND FLY

On a bright day in late summer, in a pleasant house in the Belgravia district, a man is standing at an open window looking idly out upon the gay life of London—looking, yet seeming not to see the whirl of brilliant equipages, the coming and going of the well-dressed throng.

The room in which he stands is quietly luxurious and charmingly indicative of a dainty feminine presence, with its scattered books and magazines, its flowers in quaint bowls and vases, and its tiny alcove, wherein is a low rocker and a ribboned work-basket. But the brightness within and the brightness without are alike lost upon this man.

He is tall and spare, and erect in spite of his age, which is far past middle-life. His face is pale, and has once been very handsome; the hair, brushed straight back from a high white brow, is fine and soft, slightly wavy, and so long that its curling ends rub upon the collar of his rather unfashionable frock-coat. His chin is beardless, and the thin cheek as smooth as that of a boy. The mouth is firm-lipped; the eyes dark, and capable of many expressions. The countenance, in short, is at all times refined, intellectual—that of a man well-born, well-bred.

Usually the dark eyes look out upon the world with a dreamy melancholy, but sometimes they are lighted up with a strange intensity of scorn and bitterness and stern

resolve. At such moments the stately old man becomes another being. The erect form seems to expand with vital force, the slender hands are alive with nervous gesture, the thin lips set themselves in two scornful lines, the eyes flash and blaze and the slow voice grows ringing clear and strong with the enthusiasm that sways him.

Such to see is Miles La Croix, as he stands that fine morning looking out upon fashionable London, and seeing it not.

"Father!" A step, a voice, and the sound of a closing door are not enough to rouse him from his reverie.

"Father!" This time a firm white hand upon his arm brought him back to the every-day world with a start. And instantly a tender smile routed the dreamy look from his fine old face.

"Ah! So you have been dreaming again, and I caught you fairly! Where now, father dear? But never mind; you shall confess to me by and by. You are wanted below, dear."

"Wanted below!" The old man passed his hand across his white brow and looked down upon the girl beside him. "Who is it, Moina?"

"Monsieur Passauf."

"Passauf!" The old man started. "Only he, my daughter?"

"As yet. He spoke of Mr. Crashaw, as if he expected to find him here. Father," hesitatingly, "is there anything amiss?"

"No, no, Moina. Amiss? Why, surely not! What could be amiss here?" He was already at the door, and he turned with his hand upon the latch. "It's only a little discussion. Crashaw set the hour for it, and I—I had quite forgotten. You will remain here, my daughter?"

The girl laughed lightly.

"When did I ever intrude, father mine, when your guests were Jules Passauf and Mr. Crashaw?" Then, seeing the look in his eyes:—"So, dear, never mind. Mr. Crashaw is too statistical for impractical me; I suppose that is all. Don't notice my whims. You know I am always ready at your call."

But as he turned and went silently out, she dropped into a seat beside the window, murmuring under her breath, "All the same I do. I detest you, Monsieur Rufus Crashaw!" She dropped her cheek upon her hand, and a very serious look crept into her face. "I wonder what they have come for?" she mused. "Oh, I wish they were not—" She checked the rebellious thought and lifted her head. "I am an unworthy daughter of my father," she said aloud, "and a weak sister of the oppressed." She pushed the window further open and leaned out, looking up and down. "How beautiful it all is!" she sighed. And then she started back from the window. "Pshaw! he has spoiled it all! Ah, he has seen me. I must go and let him in. Ugh!"

A moment later she was holding the street door wide open for a stout man who entered briskly and greeted her with a nod and a crisp—

"How d'ye do, Miss Moina," pulling at a pair of adhesive gloves the while. "Fine day," went on the newcomer. "By the way, congratulations are in order, of course. Wish you much pleasure in your good fortune, Miss La Croix.

"Thanks," said the girl composedly.

"I fancy you won't play at being your own handmaid any longer, eh?" A glove came off after the syllable and he began to wrestle with its mate.

"And why not, Mr. Crashaw?" She was leading the way toward the little back room where she knew her fa-

ther and Jules Passauf awaited him, and she flung the question back over her shoulder.

"Why not? Oh, well, because it isn't the custom of the country, for one thing—an English heiress, you know."

"I'm not an English heiress, sir; and as for the custom of the country—"

She threw open the door of the little back room and quietly announced:

"Mr. Crashaw."

When that gentleman had crossed the threshold she drew the door shut and went back to her window above stairs, smiling slightly, and with a gleam of mischief in her eyes.

Rufus Crashaw entered the small room with the air of a man assured of his welcome. He merely nodded to Passauf, but he greeted his host, who rose to receive him, with his nearest approach to respectful deference.

He was a square-shouldered, square-featured man, strong and somewhat heavy. Doggedness, strong will, cunning and energy were indicated in his face; and a goodly amount of confidence in Rufus Crashaw was shown in his eyes, his voice, and his manner.

Brisk, brusque, energetic, were words often applied to Rufus Crashaw. His advice was considered worth the asking. It had been said of him that he took uncommon good care of number one, and that he was fond of "running things." It might also have been said that he was somewhat lacking in originality, and apt to move slowly, outside of his own especial mental groove.

Although an Englishman, he spent very little of his time in his native country. He seemed always "in funds," as he himself would have put it, and it had been whispered that he had made his fortune in iron, and retired from the trade. For the rest, he was well-dressed, well-

mannered after his fashion, well-informed if not well-educated, and passed for a gentleman of leisure.

"Good morning, Mr. La Croix. You are well, I hope. Oh, Passauf, you are here before me, punctual as ever." He seated himself and laid the moist gloves across one knee. "Well, are we ready for business?"

Mr. La Croix bowed and resumed his seat near a small square table, upon which were scattered maps, writing material, two or three long, narrow books that looked like records, and a number of newspapers, mostly foreign.

Jules Passauf, a slim, dark man, with small, keen eyes looking out from a face almost lost in a short but thick growth of beard, drew his chair up to the table with a quick jerk, and mechanically took up a pen.

"Not yet, Passauf," interposed Crashaw, as he drew his own chair forward. "We will talk first, for we have something to decide. I have here a letter from Sharlan."

"From Shalran!"

Both men started; La Croix was on his feet.

Crashaw quietly took a letter from his pocket, opened it and held it out to Passauf.

"It is in his own cipher," he said. "You are better at reading than I, but wait. La Croix, you have had your seven days—have you decided?"

The old man had resumed his seat and dropped his head upon his hand.

"You had my decision seven days ago, Mr. Crashaw; they were your seven days, not mine."

"Well, well! You know what I mean. Have you decided for your daughter, or has she decided for herself?"

Miles La Croix lifted his head. "Neither," he said firmly. "I have not spoken to my daughter. Mr. Crashaw, since our last meeting a change has come into

my daughter's life. She has inherited from her mother's sister, Lady Marian Wylde, a fortune."

"Yes, I know that."

"You know it! How?"

Crashaw smiled. "You forget," he said; "in such a matter as this it would be strange if I did not know. Your daughter is one of us."

"Not quite."

"Well, that is not her fault. But we are wasting words." He turned again to Passauf. "Give me the letter," he said, and his face settled into sternness.

Without one glance at the document, Jules Passauf gave it back into the hand outstretched to take it, and turned his keen little eyes and expressionless face upon their host.

Miles La Croix was trembling visibly now, and drops of sweat stood out upon his temples. But he met the cold eyes squarely, and his own were unwavering.

Presently Crashaw withdrew his gaze, and taking up the letter, began to trifle with it. Finally he spoke, very mildly:

"So, after all, La Croix, you are going to lose your opportunity? It's too bad."

Suddenly the old man arose and stood erect, but trembling still, before the two men, looking from one to the other as he spoke.

"Crashaw—Passauf—you know me, and you know the desire of my heart. If I were a solitary man with no ties, no vows to break, there is nothing within my power, nothing that my intellect could grasp or my strength compass, that I would hesitate to undertake. America, India, Australia, the uttermost parts of the earth, are all alike to me. If I possessed a hundred million, I would put them all into the treasury of the great cause and set forth alone and penniless upon its humblest mission.

But then, my daughter and my new duty to her—" He broke off abruptly and sank into his seat. A flame of crimson had replaced the pallor in his face, his eyes were glowing almost fiercely.

Crashaw made a quick gesture, which Passauf seemed readily to interpret.

"La Croix, my dear friend," he exclaimed; "why, man, you look ill! Passauf!"

But Jules Passauf was already at the door, which he opened hastily, calling: "Mademoiselle! Oh, Mademoiselle La Croix!" And, as a clear voice sounded a prompt answer, "Come quickly, and bring water!" he said.

Light steps came down the passage, and Moina La Croix, a glass of water in her hand, swept swiftly into the room. She hastened to her father, and, lifting his bowed head gently, held the glass to his lips.

The old man drank the water greedily, and in a moment raised his head and smiled upon the fair girl, whose arm still rested about his neck. She put down the half-drained goblet and turned swiftly upon Rufus Crashaw.

"Mr. Crashaw, is there any real necessity for such interviews just now, when he was recovering so nicely? Did not you promise me—"

She stopped abruptly. Mr. Crashaw had taken up the letter, the reading of which he had so lately bidden and forbidden, and held it out to her with a deferential bow.

"Miss La Croix, you will find my reason there."

The girl drew away from him a little.

"What is it?" she asked coldly.

"A letter from the Master."

"Oh!" The girl's face flushed, and she drew away yet further.

"From him!" she breathed; "and does it concern us?"

"Yes; all of us—your father, first and most. You may read it, Miss Moina."

She took the letter in silence, and moving back a pace, began to scan rapidly the closely written pages. Suddenly all the life and color died out of her face. She put up a hand to stifle the cry that rose to her lips, and the letter fluttered from her fingers to the floor.

Across the face of Crashaw came a look of consternation, and he turned to meet the calm little eyes of Jules Passauf, who nodded reassuringly, and bent to take up the fallen letter, which he proffered again to the still motionless girl.

But she pushed it away with a quick gesture. The blood surged back to her face, and into her great dark eyes came that burning look which made father and child so wonderfully alike.

"Father! Oh, father mine!" She flung herself upon her knees beside him, and drew his hand down to her shoulder. "Father, dear, it has come! Look up—don't you hear me? Our dream is to be realized at last! Good heavens! Help me, Passauf; he has fainted."

She knelt before him, chafing the long thin hand. "I don't understand it," she whispered. "I thought he would rejoice at this."

"I can explain it," said Crashaw. "He cannot go without you; and how can he take an English heiress away from her estate—from her—"

"Hush!" broke in the girl. "He is conscious. Please go into the next room."

A moment later, as she again held fresh water to her father's lips, she said tenderly:

"Papa, I am going to leave you with Mr. Passauf; I will be back very soon." He answered by a nod, and in another moment she had joined Crashaw in the next room.

"Now," she said, approaching him with her head very erect, "what were you about to say?"

"Simply this: I happen to know that you have become your aunt's heiress. I also am told that your father has made a vow never to leave you behind in his travels; is that true?"

"Yes; he promised my dying mother. Her own childhood had been a peculiarly lonely one, and she wished to insure me against the same fate."

"And is it true, also, that your aunt requests you to live at Silverthorpe?"

"Yes."

"Then his words and their meaning are explained. Miss La Croix, I know from your father that your devotion to the cause is only second to his. May I suggest a way out of the dilemma?"

"Go on."

"If this fortune which has come to you were devoted to this grand work of ours, you would no longer be hampered by it—no longer hinder your father and thwart his loftiest ambition. You could go with him and work by his side."

She regarded him fixedly for a moment, then she said, with an odd gleam in her dark eyes:

"Your knowledge, it seems, has its limits, sir. My aunt's will contains a clause expressly designed to defeat any such purpose. Her property descends to the next of kin."

"Ah!" He came a step nearer and spoke in a lower tone, and with what was meant for a benevolent smile. "Then I see but one other way. If you were to become the wife of one of your father's lieutenants, all could set sail for America merrily. Think of it!"

"There is no need," she flashed out. "Unfortunately, papa's lieutenants all seem to be ineligibles." She turned toward the door.

Ah, Moina La Croix, the day will come when you

will be made to pay for uttering that malicious little jibe!

"Papa," said Moina when they were again alone, "when are we going to the 'States?'"

"Moina!"

"Now, papa, listen and be good. If my Aunt Marian had said I should forfeit her fortune by not living at Silverthorpe, I should send for her lawyer and tell him to look for the next of kin. It was only a request, and one I should carry out against my own desires if I did not owe a higher duty elsewhere. Aunt Marian was kind, but I did not ask her for her fortune, and neither you nor I could live happily at Silverthorpe, from which my dear mamma was shut out for so long. We shall go to the States, papa dear. I want to go almost as much as you do, and if I may not give myself to the cause, I may at least give my time and labor, if need be."

"Moina, my daughter," he said, his pale face lighting up; "sit down by me, child. I want to think."

She sat down at his feet and took one of his hands, stroking it softly, but she did not speak. For many long moments he too sat silent. She was well accustomed to his mood, and often sat like this, silently waiting his time. At last he bent down and kissed her.

"Is it true, Moina, or do you only say it to please me? Do you really wish to cross the ocean?"

"Yes, papa. Ah! you know how I love the sea, and all my journeyings have been by land, except for a bit of the Mediterranean and the Channel. And the new world, papa—why, it is alluring to me! Besides, do not I know how you long to be there—what a grand work you hope to do? If all they say is true, they need you there. Thousands of men banded together and without a leader—oh, papa, they need you! We must go!"

He pressed her hand between his own.

"If all that we hear is true, my daughter, we can do much good over there. But now hear me. If matters go well, I shall take you at your word. Indeed, I should grieve to give it up now. But since you will not live at Silverthorpe, you owe your aunt something. You are very young, Moina—too young to choose a life-work. It was your aunt's hope that you would one day shine in the society to which your mother was born, and I cannot permit you to thwart her wishes in this. Promise me that for a year you will give up all thought of taking part in our work, other than such as you have already done and as I shall assign you, and that you will live, as nearly as you can, a life of a young lady of wealth and position. Try the world, Moina—try it for a year."

"And then, papa?"

"And then—you shall choose. Do you promise this?"

"Yes, papa; I promise gladly."

"Then all is settled. We go to the States."

CHAPTER III

MASTER AND SCRIBE

In Thames street, that home of busy dealers and goal of lower venders, all is bustle and confusion. Pushing his way through the throng, at three o'clock in the afternoon, went a man who might have been a small and unusually well-mannered tradesman, to judge by his dress.

He wore a long, loose top-coat, which fluttered, as he walked, almost at his heels, and a wide-brimmed soft hat, pulled low down upon his forehead, concealed all of his face that was not otherwise hidden beneath a straggling growth of beard.

Up four flights of stairs of a dark and steep building he toiled slowly, to enter a small, dark ante-room, the door of which he opened promptly by the help of a key. Before a wardrobe the man stopped and took off his long coat and slouch hat. Another rapid motion, and the hirsute covering dropped from his face and followed the hat and coat. A wig of unkempt hair came next, and the aperture swung to, and the manipulator of this most convenient wardrobe moved a step toward the end nearest the outer door. There a second hook served as a lever, and a panel again opened inward. This time the cavity revealed appeared to be well filled, for, thrusting in his hand, the man drew out a coat which he donned, a hat of quite another type than that which he had discarded, a brush, a comb, and a tiny hand-mirror.

Having critically surveyed his face and arranged his

recent and closely cropped hair, which was quite white, he closed and locked the wardrobe and turned once more to the inner door. He tapped lightly three raps, and then, as noiselessly as he had shot the bolt, he withdrew it. Another moment of waiting and a third key was applied, and the door pushed hastily open.

What he saw was very simple: a large square room with dingy walls and ceilings, but scrupulously clean; a large square table of some dark wood occupied the center of the room; a dozen chairs were arranged about it in stiff array. In each of the two corners opposite the door of entrance stood a desk.

At one of these desks sat a man bending over a pile of unopened letters. Even as the door swung inward, he gave no signs that he heard.

As the new-comer approached the desk, the automatic scribe put his pen behind his ear, closed his ink-bottle with a sharp click, and turned half around.

"Any letters, Dassett?"

From a pigeon-hole the man took half a dozen letters, each marked "Private," and gave them to the new-comer, who took them at once to the table and began their perusal.

After a time the scribe looked around, and seeing him no longer reading, said:

"Mr. Sharlan, there is a message from Crashaw. He will be here soon."

"A message? And who, pray, was his messenger?"

"Jules Passauf."

"What position does he occupy relatively to Crashaw?"

"Very much what I occupy relatively to you, Mr. Sharlan."

"Ah, indeed! The trusted and trustworthy confidential friend and secretary, then."

No reply; the trusted and trustworthy was again scratching at his desk.

"You have been careful to have no letters come directly here?" he asked, finally.

"I have taken all possible precaution."

"And your own going and coming—"

"Is always by the rear entrance. I am taken for a gentleman's valet."

"Ah! really!" Sharlan laughed lightly. "Are there any letters that require my personal notice?"

"There are some here—shall I run over the list?"

"Yes."

From a long narrow slip of paper the scribe began to read in a tone that was quite expressionless, and with a pause after each item.

"From Cairo. No. 19. De Rayner reports strong feeling; thinks a demonstration is just now very much needed."

"From Cairo!" A moment of silence, while Mr. Sharlan opens a large book and runs his eye over a list of names. "Put the matter into the department of Dr. Cassen."

"Umph! Cassen has just written for funds, from Paris."

"Let Drasky send him fifty pounds."

"Wainwright reports the pamphlets exhausted in the provinces, and a need for more. They are, for the most part, well received."

"Let him be supplied at once."

"Wainwright suggests, for later circulation, a stronger pamphlet."

"Well—suggest, Dassett. Who shall write the 'stronger' pamphlet?"

"Rene Savareis."

"Who is he?"

"A member of the Third Division."

"How was he first brought to your notice?"

"Through Crashaw's friend, La Croix. I think he is one of La Croix's converts."

"I see that you don't like this young fellow. In a word, tell me what is the worst thing you know of him."

"I have told you my best and worst. Mr. Rene Savareis is very enthusiastic, full of chivalry, full of fine feelings and nice scruples."

Dassett turned back to his desk, and a queer smile came into Sharlan's face. Crossing the room, he seated himself near the desk.

"Now, Dassett," he said, "about this candidate of Crashaw's—this Miles La Croix?"

"Miles La Croix is sixty-five," he began "and he looks older at times. He is said to be of good blood, his father being a French adventurer of high family but fallen fortunes, and his mother the daughter of a Florentine revolutionist. La Croix married an English gentlewoman who died, leaving him with a child two years old. Moina La Croix is now a beautiful young woman. La Croix inherited a competency in his youth, which he lost by some unlucky venture. I am told that when his wife died they were in extreme poverty, she having been disowned by her English relatives because of her marriage. La Croix is one of those men who inspire confidence and attract friends."

"I see that you, at least, are an admirer of this La Croix."

"So is every one who knows him, except, perhaps, Rufus Crashaw. Miles La Croix is an honest believer in the cause he advocates, and his daughter is in sympathy with him. Owing to his loss of fortune, he has had opportunity to learn his lesson and study the wrongs of the working-people at short range. His wife died among them. All the kindness she knew in her last moments was at the hands of the poor. These things have made

upon him a lasting impression. The result you have in the present Miles La Croix. If he can be kept regulated—kept within bounds—he ought to be a power for us in the States' where I too wish to go."

"You?"

"Yes. I wish to become a spy," said Dassett, doggedly. "Look here, Mr. Sharlan, you know that you can trust me."

"Yes, Dassett; but a spy is chosen."

"Pardon me; I do not wish to usurp her place."

"Hers!"

"I have not been prying, Mr. Sharlan, but I know who it is, and I ask you again if it might not be well to send some one who could assist her if needed, and who, unless that time came, would remain unseen, unknown. I will be honest. I want to go for a personal reason, and I will pledge myself to be always at the service of your friend, as well as yours. More than once you have said that I had the natural qualifications for a detective. I want to test them. Let me try."

"Can you find me a secretary?"

"Yes. I have thought of that, and I believe I can."

"Have him here to-morrow then. When I have seen him, you shall have my answer."

CHAPTER IV

MOINA AND MADELINE

"Godmother, look look quick! Ah, there, she has turned away!"

"What is it, dear?"

"That beautiful creature again, of course!"

"Oh, the lovely girl? What a Quixote you are, Madeline. You are as anxious to make the acquaintance of that fair lady as if you were a man, instead of—"

"An old maid."

"Nonsense! One must be at least twenty-four before she can lawfully claim the title, and you—"

"I am approaching that blissful age fast enough. Yes, I admit that I do want to know that girl."

"I should think that might be easy enough."

"I'm not so sure; she seems very reserved—I was about to say shy, but that is not the word; shyness implies self-consciousness, and that girl is as gracefully unconscious of her own grace and beauty, and of the admiring eyes that follow her, as if she were alone with that stately old man who must be her father."

Madeline's companion, lying back in the steamer chair, wrapped in her rugs and trifling with some fleecy wools that lay tangled in her lap, smiled up into the face turned toward her, letting her eyes linger lovingly there.

It was a beautiful face and a youthful one, in spite of the owner's avowed nearness to the mystic line which cuts off the maiden from the realm of spinsterhood; and it was more than this: it was a face whose beauty had

been chastened, disciplined, and purified; a fine, firm, courageous face, at once strong and tender, self-contained and sensitive, helpful and womanly sweet.

At twenty-three, Madeline Payne had lived out one life-time of trial and suffering; had passed through bitterest sorrows; had known the world as a hard task-master; had been sinned against, tempted, persecuted; had fought her battles and conquered, first her enemies, and then herself. And now, chastened, purified, humbled, and strengthened, she stands looking down into the face of her nearest and dearest friend (for blood relative she has not one), and is a happy woman; knowing the world and her fellow-mortals, loving its good things, loathing its evil; ready with heart and hand to help its sufferers, to pity the weak, to cheer on the strong; trusting in God, and believing fully, after many fierce battles with her own fiery nature, that all her life has been and is—

"Best for her and for mankind."

As the elder woman looks and smiles, Madeline draws nearer.

"Are you quite comfortable, dear? Let me pull up that rug."

"No, child; I am very comfortable, and what a lovely morning! I wish I was a better sailor, such as you. I feel like a passenger just come on board, the life on deck is so new to me. And you, in these few days—you know everybody here, of course."

"Not quite; you forget "

"I mean in your way—and it's a very good way. Sit down and tell me about your fellow passengers."

Madeline seated herself with a smile in her brown eyes, but with a very sober face.

"First," she began, "there is a lady on board who interests me more than all the rest. This lady is tall and slender and rather fragile; not ill, you understand—not

in the least—only dainty, and, I sometimes fancy, a bit spoiled by a rather domineering young woman who looks after her very sharply, and of whom I have not a very flattering opinion. This very gentle, sweet voiced lady has been ill in her state-room ever since the first day out, and has appeared on deck to-day for the first time. She is sitting in a deck-chair, and the domineering young woman in a moment will present to her the captain of the ship, which is not a ship, but a very prosaic steamer."

The lady put out a slender hand and laid a finger lightly upon the lovely lips now parting in a smile of welcome, as the captain approached; and in another moment Mrs. Ralston and Captain Hardin were made acquainted and were exchanging the usual courtesies, while Madeline Payne, standing erect once more, was looking around and now and then contributing her word to the conversation.

"Captain," she said after a time, "I am growing interested in one of your passengers, and I want some information concerning—"

"Him?"

"Her!" Madeline laughed softly. "I mean the beautiful girl who is almost always with her father."

"The lady is a Miss La Croix, booked from London, via Liverpool, to New York, like yourself. The old man is a gentleman, and I have found him most interesting, although very reticent. He has favored me with an introduction to his daughter, but her reserve I have not as yet been able to penetrate. Do you know, I fancy that there is a romance going on—perhaps I ought to say beginning—under our eyes?"

'Indeed!" Madeline turned a smiling face upon the captain, who had taken a seat beside Mrs. Ralston. "Pray, let us into the secret."

"I have fancied that this poetic-looking youth is casting longing eyes toward Miss La Croix," he said. "In fact,

I have seen her eyes follow some movement of his more than once, and I fancied this morning that the father noticed something of the same sort, for I saw his eyes follow the young fellow in his promenade and then turn toward his daughter with, I thought, a look of warning or mild reproof in them."

During the days that followed, Madeline Payne found her list of acquaintances on board the steamer "Manhattan" growing large by rapid degrees. First, Captain Hardin presented to Mrs. Ralston and herself the La Croix, father and daughter. And then, by a little stratagem easy enough of execution, Mr. Crashaw made it necessary that Miss Payne present him to the two. This done, it appeared that Crashaw formed the acquaintance of the good-looking youth, who might, according to Madeline, have been either poet or musician. And soon the group that congregated daily about Mrs. Ralston's adjustable deck-chair was composed of strange elements: Miles and Moina La Croix, Rufus Crashaw, who, for reasons which seemed mutually understood and mutually satisfactory, enacted the role of stranger to both Rene Savareis, the handsome youth, Captain Hardin, and two or three sight-seers.

It was a not unpleasant party, dissimilar as were the elements which composed it. Before they separated upon anchoring in New York harbor, each knew of the other little biographical fragments such as these:

Mrs. Ralston, a widow, wealthy, childless, and very much attached to Miss Payne, who had been her traveling companion for three years. Mrs. Ralston was returning to New York to live, and her friend Madeline would live with her.

Madeline Payne, an orphan and an heiress, having chosen Mrs. Ralston for friend and chaperone, would be brought out by her, and looked forward to a winter of

pleasure. She was not a frivolous young woman, but she was alive to all that was charming and pleasant in life, and meant to see society from a foremost place in its ranks; for such place she could well command, because of her beauty and cleverness, her wealth, and the social standing already assured of her chaperone and other friends.

Miles La Croix, so said Captain Hardin, was a gentleman and an artist. Possibly he would open a studio and devote a portion of his time to his art.

Rufus Crashaw was a man of affairs. He was interested in many things, notably, just now, in railroads, in western lands, and American politics.

Rene Savareis was also an artist. He meant to see life in New York for a while, and perhaps make a few pictures. He was not a finished artist—oh, no, he needed instruction. When Mr. La Croix had opened his studio, he might perhaps hope for a little help from him.

Between the two girls a genuine liking sprang up, and when alone with Madeline Payne, Moina La Croix was at her best. It was her first ocean voyage, and, oddly enough, she was not sea-sick. Every remaining day of the passage was bright, and Moina, in Madeline's company, enjoyed it greatly.

One thing Madeline Payne was quick to note. So long as they conversed of impersonal things, Moina was frank, and full of pretty ideas and quaint conceits. But to introduce into the conversation the names of Mr. Crashaw or Rene Savareis was to bring at once over the girl's fair face a veil of reticence, and, in spite of her efforts to seem indifferent, her manner became embarrassed.

"I have been among the toiling ones," she said one day. "I wanted to know for myself. I think I shall never outlive the horror of it—the shock it was to

learn that so near me, breathing the same air, were young girls like myself, and older women, mothers and grandmothers, wearing out their lives just for the privilege of living!—and such living! Huddled together in close little garret rooms are women sewing, living upon a dry loaf, drinking tainted water, or poisonous cheap tea by way of luxury—dressed in tattered clothing, and no light, no beauty, no sunshine in their monotonous lives! Once I saw an old woman who had just been released from prison, and I asked her what her life had been behind those barred doors. 'It was a very good life,' she said, 'compared with the life I used to live. I had better food, a better bed, and lighter work in prison than I could hope for out of it. I knew that I would—and I stole to get there.'"

"My dear, you are a little enthusiast," said Madeline, admiringly. "And what a telling point that little story would make in a Socialistic speech! I begin to suspect you. Come, honestly now, aren't you a bit of a Socialist yourself?"

Madeline had uttered her bantering speech lightly, and only to curb the enthusiasm glowing upon the lovely face beside her. She was not prepared for the effect of her lightly uttered words. Moina's face, already flushing and glowing, grew yet more vivid, and then paled utterly. She withdrew her hand with a quick, startled motion, and half rose, her eyes involuntarily seeking the place where her father sat in conversation with Mrs. Ralston and Captain Hardin.

"Pardon me"—it was an icily cool voice at her elbow—"permit me—"

Moina sank back into her seat and put out her hand to take from Mr. Crashaw the handkerchief that had fluttered from her lap to the deck.

"Were you about to join your father, Miss La Croix? if so—"

"Thank you." Moina's voice was quite calm now, and her eyes met his without flinching. "I have no such intention at present, Mr. Crashaw."

CHAPTER V

SENTENCE OF DEATH

If there is in all this world a sight more hideous, more hopeless, than a coffin, it is a prison cell—the cell of the condemned.

If the coffin is tenanted only by a piece of pulseless clay, it holds no heart-break, no despair, no horror of the dread hour to come. But the cell of the condemned, who soon and surely will bid good-bye to the world, and at a given moment go out into space—oh, the dreariness of that!

"On such or such a day, between the hours of ten and two of the clock, sentence of death will be executed upon the prisoner."

These, or such as these, were the words that repeated themselves over and over in the ears of a pale prisoner, the sole occupant of a "condemned" cell, on the twelfth of May, and at "ten of the clock."

He was sitting upon the side of his narrow iron bed, looking straight before him—not at the bare wall and grated door, but through and beyond them—seeing, with that inward vision that neither bolts nor bars nor prison walls can hold in check—what?

His clasped hands hung loosely between his knees, upon which his elbows rested, and, while his body was inclined forward, his head was lifted and thrown slightly back. The smooth-shaven face was a youthful one; not handsome, but firm in its lines, refined in its expression—not at all the face of a typical assassin. There

HE WAS SITTING UPON THE SIDE OF HIS NARROW IRON BED, LOOKING STRAIGHT BEFORE HIM.—Moina, p. 40.

was no hardness there, no trace of a vicious life. The forehead was broad and white, the eyes looked straightforward, and with no hint of fear in them. The loosely clasped hands were white, soft and well cared for—manifestly the hands of a gentleman. The mouth was fine, and, when it relaxed in a smile, the otherwise plain face must have seemed almost handsome.

And this man, who could not have seen more than twenty-four or twenty-five years of life, was a murderer! Not a murderer condemned upon evidence, circumstantial or other, but a murderer by his own confession.

And what a murder! The victim was a man of sixty, a quiet, unobtrusive citizen, beloved by his own little circle of friends, and scarcely known beyond it. And the cause, the provocation? Ah, there was the mystery!

Jacob Traill had emerged from the church where, every Sunday evening for many years, he had bowed his head in humble, sincere worship. Before him, behind him, all about him, were other worshipers. Close behind him a solitary figure walked—always close behind him—until, half a dozen blocks from the church, the crowd became scattered, and a row of trees stretching out beyond threw deep shadows and swallowed up the flitting figures moving this way and that.

Then a young man leaning over a cottage gate and holding in the friendly shadow the hand of a fair companion saw, across the way, a slow moving form before, and another that moved more swiftly, as if in pursuit. Suddenly they seemed to blend and become one struggling mass. Then, instantly almost, a sharp report rang out, breaking the Sabbath stillness of the quiet quarter.

The fair hand was dropped and the youth darted across the street. But quick as he was, another was before him, with a strong clutch upon the arm of the

slayer, and the youth's voice rang out in that always thrilling cry of "Murder!"

Afterward it appeared that the pair were well-matched, and that the assassin made a momentary struggle. But his capturer, a man with a cool head and well-developed muscle, easily wrested the smoking pistol from his grasp and that was the end of resistance.

The prisoner, when put to trial, pleaded guilty, but refused to give his name or his motive. He was guilty—that was enough.

And now the day of expiation had come. Between the hours of ten and two he was to die, and it had struck ten already!

"Four more hours, perhaps, to wait," the prisoner muttered wearily.

The door of his cell opened slowly, and a man, young like himself, but tall, erect, and full of glowing health and vigor, entered and paused near the door, standing silently there until it had closed behind him. Then he seated himself upon the cot beside the prisoner.

"Well," he said; and the single syllable was at once a greeting and an assurance of sympathy.

The condemned turned his head.

"You!" he said, turning toward the new-comer. "I thought it was the chaplain."

"No; I prevailed with them once more."

The prisoner's hopeless eyes scanned his face almost wistfully.

"You seem a man born to prevail," he said slowly. "I wish—" He checked his speech, but did not withdraw his gaze.

"I have not prevailed with you," said the visitor, in a low tone. "Have you thought it all over? Is there no way open to you? No word that you can utter? No sign that you may give, and that I may understand?"

The prisoner arose and stood erect before him.

"Is it possible!" he said. "Do you still believe in me?" He turned away his face for a moment. "If you persist in this," he said at last, huskily, "you will have me unmanned at the last moment. I beg of you, don't do that."

"I won't!"—getting up and answering in a most matter-of-fact tone. "I want to do you good, not ill." Then he came a step nearer. "Tell me—for the last time I ask you—is there no wish unfulfilled, no message, no word? Can I do nothing to throw a ray of light, a gleam of comfort, upon these last hours of yours?"

The prisoner turned upon him suddenly.

"Tell me," he said, with low-toned vehemence, "why you come to me like this? Who are you? And what end will this interest of yours serve?"

"I'm going to answer you fully. Who am I? I introduced myself correctly. I am Roger Drexel, a bachelor admitted to the bar, but without an office or practice. Nature has endowed me with a fondness and a faculty for diving under the surface in search of hidden meanings. I look always for the pearl in the oyster. Why do I come to you as I have?" He leaned toward the other, who was now sitting near him upon the cot. "Because I must!" with a slight gesture, and holding the eye of the prisoner with his own. "Because we are brothers!"

"What!" The prisoner lifted one hand quickly, and as quickly let it fall again. "How—far—" he articulated.

"Not far—only across the threshold; but far enough to learn something of how things are done above us, beyond us; how the great family is growing, and how—" He paused, for the prisoner had made a gesture entreating him to silence.

"Say no more," he whispered. "It can do no good! Why have you revealed yourself now?"

"I will tell you." Roger Drexel arose and stood over the condemned, who was trembling violently, and very pale. "It is because I see in you one of a long list of martyrs—men sacrificed at the bidding of commanders safe and high, terrible power for good or evil, and working through the hearts and hands—yes, and the lives of our brethren."

His strong hand fell heavily on the shoulder of the man before him—heavily, but not ungently. "Look into my eyes, comrade, and tell me: When you took the first step, with open eyes, or so you thought, with heart thrilling with lofty sentiments, did you recognize anywhere the hand of iron under the velvet? Looking up the 'shining ladder,' lifting your face 'toward the stars,' was there anything sinister in their gleam?—anything that was the faintest prophecy of—this?"

He swept the narrow cell with a glance and a gesture, and the poor prisoner understood.

"No," he groaned. "No, there was nothing, nothing."

"And yet," Roger Drexel's low tone was bitter and very stern, "the Captains, the Commanders of the Nineties, the Council, all saw, all see to-day, the first step and the last. They know that, fair and white as is the first portal, when we have entered, there is no going back. They see the end from the beginning, and yet—"

"Hush!" The condemned man sprang up and put out an imploring hand. "What is it you are saying! Don't you know—"

"Yes, I know, although I have only trod the outer portal. And you—but no matter. If what I am about to say is true, you need make me no reply; but if I am in error, I beg of you make it known to me. You can do that safely, honorably."

For a moment the two men looked into each other's eyes; then the condemned man dropped once more upon the cot and buried his face in his hands.

Already it was eleven o'clock. Suddenly the hands dropped from before the face that had been forced back into its accustomed calm.

"One thing I will say," the prisoner said, firmly. "I have longed to tell it to you before. I could not quite bear to go out into the unknown without once lifting my head and letting the last spark of manhood left to me have its way." He caught his breath sharply, and suddenly lifted his right hand, holding it aloft and throwing back his head as he spoke. "As if I were already in the presence of that God whom I am so soon to face, I swear to you that no thought of anger, or hatred, or revenge, no hope of gain, animated the brain that directed or the hand that struck that hideous blow. Already while that poor victim yet struggled at my feet, I was, to myself and to all the world, as it concerned or affected me a dead man, a suicide—a murderer of cause; a murderer in intent, of more than my one poor victim. In God's name, do not call me a martyr, and so perhaps help to make other assassins!"

He was silent a moment, and then his chin again dropped upon his breast.

"I cannot say more than this of myself," he added in a tone of pathetic apology. "Do not ask it again, I beg. Who I am or was, and what I was, matters little now. I was a man once, with a home and a future. I was loved, and I—oh, my God!"

His hands went up in a despairing gesture. He writhed to his feet and then flung himself face downward upon the prison cot; and tears, the bitterest that man ever sheds, and sobs that shook him wofully and were

a torture to his listener, broke up for the first time the stolid calm of his demeanor.

Writhing and torn by strong emotion, he lay there prone upon his face, and Roger Drexel, with set lips and clinched fingers, paced the little cell and waited for the storm to pass.

The turnkey came to the door and looked in through the iron grating, and then the chaplain showed in the doorway a gentle, anxious face; but Drexel gave to the one only a glance, and waved him away with a gesture; to the other he said:

"Not now; I must not lose this chance. Leave us. I will call you—in time."

The face of the chaplain was very anxious when he again presented himself, but again Drexel whispered:

"Not yet."

"It is almost one o'clock," the good man whispered.

There was a sudden movement of the form which for some moments had been lying still upon the cot and breathing heavily, but it was not until after the face of the chaplain was withdrawn that the prisoner lifted his head and then sat up.

"So," he said quite calmly, "it is nearly over." For a moment his gaze wandered slowly all about the cell, then it fastened itself upon Roger Drexel.

"After all," he said, with a shadowy smile, "I do thank you. I am indebted to you. Great heavens! what a forlorn, friendless wretch I would have been but for you. I am indebted to you, I dare say, for all of the comforts permitted to me."

"No."

"I think it must be so. Why have you done this?"

Drexel drew closer to him.

"Because I saw in you the prophecy of what my fate might have been but for the sober thought, the timely

warning, you have brought to me; because I began, as no doubt you began, an enthusiast; and there are others, many others, like us—you and I—all over the world, being just led, then driven, they know not whither. Let me tell you what I am going to do—if you do not forbid it—even if you do, perhaps."

"What is it?"

"You have refused to give me your name, your home, your nationality even. We do not know your rank, nor if you leave friends. I ask you nothing, and so—ask nothing of me. I am going to unravel the mystery you bequeath to me; and if I find at the end that I can set at rest heart-rending uncertainty, and not make sad hearts sadder, I am going to make your story known, and so emancipate myself while I vindicate you; for I say again, you are only what I might have been—must have been, perhaps—but for you. I have studied you long and well, my poor comrade, and if I have read your story aright, I cannot but know what it is you have endured, and how light, how easy in comparison, this that is to come will be."

Into the face of the prisoner came a woful pallor, and the anguish that looked out of his eyes was awful to see.

"Oh!" he moaned, "you don't know even yet. You cannot fathom it—the worst."

"Pardon me." Drexel dropped down beside him and put again a hand upon his shoulder. "I think I do."

"You think—you do?"

Drexel bent his head and put his lips to the prisoner's ear.

"Your sacrifice has been in vain," he whispered. "*It was the wrong man.*"

For a long moment the two gazed into each other's faces in utter silence; then the door of the cell creaked upon

its hinges, and there entered the chaplain in his black robe, the sheriff and an attendant—the hour had come.

Twenty minutes later, Roger Drexel stood outside the jail, alone, pallid and sick at heart. There upon the highway, with the ebb and flow of life all about him, he turned his face toward a sunlit sky, seeing the while only a pallid, drawn, dead face.

"As God hears me," he murmured below his breath, "with all my strength and in all ways possible, I will fight this hydra-headed monster that has well-nigh devoured me; this secret society that has girdled the world and that has usurped the powers of life and death —anathema maranatha!"

CHAPTER VI

A LAWYER'S FEE

Two hours after that last scene in the prison, where Roger Drexel had sustained the unknown condemned to the last, standing beside him until the horrible death-trap sprung, he was seeking admittance at the door of lawyer Fallingsbee's private office.

"You are aware, perhaps, that I was beside the man who was executed, scarcely three hours ago, for the murder of Jacob Traill; beside him in his last moments," he said to the lawyer—"and he gave me a message for you and your associates."

"Yes?"

"He asked me to thank you for all you did and all that you sought to do in his behalf."

Mr. Fallingsbee was silent a moment.

"Well," he said finally, "that is more than he said to me—to any of us. A strange case—a strange case!" Then he jerked his chair closer to that occupied by his visitor. "Drexel," he said, "you're a queer fellow! How in the world came you to be interested in that chap? But, pardon me, perhaps you know him?"

"If I had," said Drexel, "it would have been my duty to come forward and make his identity known."

"And you were with him to the end? Well, then, I dare say you could give me information—me, his lawyer. Come, now, did he open his mouth at the last?"

"Not to make communications."

"Not even to tell his name, or his motive?"

"Not even that."

The lawyer mused a moment, then—

"You said something about wanting information," he hazarded.

"I want to ask some questions quite on my own responsibility; and I want to beg you not to question me in return—at least not now. I will begin by telling all I have to tell of my reasons for asking these questions. They are purely my own. I am not acting for any one, unless it might be for the dead man."

"What do you want to know?" the lawyer abruptly demanded.

"I want to know who retained you to defend the prisoner?"

"I can't tell you."

"You mean you will not?"

"I can't tell you who retained me; I don't know."

"Not know? Mr. Fallingsbee, if you are under any promise of secrecy, pray say so. I have not asked this from idle curiosity."

"I'm quite sure of that, Drexel, and I'm under no promise of secrecy. I'm quite willing to tell you in confidence all that I know. A few days after the murder I received a printed letter—"

"Printed!"

"With a pen, I mean—and badly printed, too. There was no preamble, no address, no signature. It simply asked if I would undertake the defense of the man who had caused the death of Jacob Traill, and for how much. My answer must be definite; there would be no correspondence. Should I accept, the money would be paid in advance, and I must conduct the case in my own way."

"Strange!"

"Surprised, are you? Well, so was I. I think it was

the strangeness of it that induced me to reply about like this: 'I will undertake the case for five thousand dollars.' I posted my reply at noon. The next morning I received a package containing ten five-hundred-dollar bank-notes, and the messenger who brought it got away before I could get a glimpse of him. The prisoner, when I told him of this, manifested neither emotion nor interest."

"You have obliged me greatly, Mr. Fallingsbee," said Drexel. "It seems almost churlish not to make you full explanation here and now. I have been from the first oddly interested in this strange case. But my ideas are at present too vague to be put into words. I want to know all that I can, and if I find that my inquiries lead to anything, I will enlighten you. Will you tell me the address to which you sent your reply to that printed letter?"

"Really—but—yes, I will! It's a post-office box." He arose, went across the room, and selected a small book of addresses.

In a moment he had copied the number upon a card and put it into Drexel's hand.

On his way home Roger Drexel pondered the strange case, which to him was daily growing stranger.

"Two things I may set down as at least probable," he said to himself. "The party or parties who retained Fallingsbee have a long purse; second, it looks as if the money is paid to cover up the tracks of some one unknown, or to encourage the prisoner to keep silence while some one gets out of harm's way. In some fashion that man has been taken in a net, and he chose to die knowing this, yet with closed lips. Strange! strange!"

Pondering thus, he was brought to a halt by a hand upon his shoulder.

"Drexel, where now? I am glad to have met you. Shall you dine with us to-day?"

"Yes; that is—do you have any one else?"

"No; we scarcely felt festive, and Olive was fearing that you would be too seriously inclined."

"I shall be only too glad to come to you after such a dreary scene; but—I almost feared there would be others."

"No; oh, no! Olive—indeed all of us feel almost as if we had some personal interest in this day's tragedy."

"That is natural. You witnessed the beginning, Philip, and I—the end."

"And both," said Philip Girard, "were horrible."

For some moments they walked on in silence, and then they separated, Roger turning homeward and Philip going to keep an appointment at a favorite club.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER THE TRAGEDY

Dinner waited in the pretty home, pretty without and within, where Olive Girard reigned as mistress—a happy mistress now, although for a few dreary years she had been a sad one, and the pretty villa had been a home of gloom, for Olive Girard and her husband Philip, two noble souls, worthy of the best that the world could give, had been made the playthings of fate, when that uncertain vixen was in an adverse mood.

Mr. and Mrs. Girard were not, strictly speaking, in society. They had gathered about them a charming little circle of friends, called from among society's best, and every member tried and not found wanting.

Dinner-time was at hand, and as yet there were but four people gathered together in the pleasant library—Olive and Philip Girard, Dr. Clarence Vaughan, and little Phil, who had been permitted to wait down-stairs that he might see his prime favorite, 'Dex,' as he called Drexel.

It was a very quiet dinner. Drexel, noted in society as a brilliant talker and the life of a dinner party, was silent and preoccupied; and the burden of the talk fell upon Dr. Vaughan and Olive Girard.

"I have a letter from Miss Payne—Madeline," remarked Mrs. Girard. "She will be in New York soon."

A quiet smile was playing about the corners of Dr. Vaughan's mouth, a look of content was in his eyes, as they rested upon Roger Drexel; and no one saw the smile

fade, or the look of content give place to one of pain, as the handsome young man opposite turned a brightening face upon host and hostess in turn.

"Is that true? Is she really coming?" Actually, his face was flushing with pleasure, and his eyes were beaming. Only Dr. Vaughan had seen his first start of glad surprise. "I'm very glad to hear it! Does she come to stay?"

"Yes, for the present. Of course, Mrs. Ralston comes with her."

"And they will reside in the city?" persisted Drexel.

"Oh, yes. Mrs. Ralston had instructed Mr. Lord, some time since, to find her a suitable house. I think she wanted to be rather gay this winter, for Madeline's sake. But Philip tells me that Mr. Lord has other ideas."

"Eh!" Drexel turned quickly upon his host. "How is that, Philip?"

"You see, Mr. Lord has decided not to give up that monster house of his, but to have some of its rooms refurnished, and he wants Mrs. Ralston to enter in and take possession. He only asks to be allowed his corner by the fireside and his occasional 'fat men's dinners,' as Madeline used to call those gatherings of grave and solid millionaires about his table."

"Mr. Lord shows good taste," was Drexel's comment. "I only hope his plan will succeed."

When the dessert was before them, and the servants dismissed, a silence fell upon all four. Through the window opposite they could look across and down the stately street, to the very spot where kindly, old Jacob Traill had given up his life.

It was Philip Girard who had been second on the scene, and who had wrested the weapon of death from the hand of the murderer. It was his call that had

brought to his side Dr. Vaughan and Roger Drexel, both of whom had been guests in Olive's dainty drawing-rooms on that unlucky night.

Jacob Traill was a neighbor and well known to Vaughan and Girard. They had followed his body to the grave with sincerest sorrow, and, in the light of after events, had come to view the career of his murderer with growing interest and a strange sort of pity.

To-day, as each one of them knew, the condemned man and his victim were before their last tribunal. The slayer of Jacob Traill had expiated his crime "between the hours of ten and two," and Roger Drexel had been with him in his last moments.

Finally, Philip Girard said abruptly:

"Drexel, you have followed this poor fellow to the end of the world with an interest that has been a cause of wonder to both of us. Are you able to tell us why?"

"I think you must admit that it has been a strange case throughout," he said. "The victim, a man so unoffending that I don't believe in all the universe another could be found who would shed his blood; the slayer, a man so reserved, so calm, so evidently not a common criminal or a criminal of any sort—his ready admission of guilt, his refusal to defend himself, or to take advantage of the thousand and one 'extenuating circumstances' that such legal advisers as his could have brought to the defense! When before, in all the history of crime, has a prisoner refused to accept insanity as a defense, a plea?"

"He was the sanest man I ever examined," said Dr. Vaughan; "the coolest, the most quietly determined."

"Undoubtedly. What was your final conclusion concerning the case?"

"First," said the doctor, slowly, "there was, must have been, a strong motive—"

"Say pressure," interrupted Drexel, dryly.

"Well, perhaps that is the word. And the idea once fixed in his mind, he practically made an end of everything, so far as himself was concerned. I believe that from the moment when he decided to do the deed, he put all thought of his own personality out of his mind. He had no more interest in himself or in his life; he no longer had a future. From the moment when he contemplated murder, he also contemplated death. If he had escaped arrest, he would have been found dead, somehow, somewhere, the next morning."

Drexel nodded.

"But his motive?" urged Philip Girard. "Do you know, I have learned a queer thing—one that has only come out since his death? Traill was a Socialist."

"What!" Drexel turned upon him quickly. "Traill was a Socialist?"

"Yes; not a rabid one, you may be sure, and not a very enthusiastic worker. He was just the good, sympathetic sort of a man who would go into such a demonstration, seeing only the helpful or pathetic side, and then draw back and condemn himself."

"But that does not help on our question," said the doctor. "Drexel—come, have you the vaguest idea or hint to give us? Have you even been able to hazard a guess?"

"I will tell you," he answered, "but it must not be repeated. I know the truth, or a part of it." He drew his chair nearer theirs, and lowered his voice. "Jacob Traill was sacrificed. He was the wrong man!"

"The wrong man! Good heavens! Who, then, was the right man?"

Drexel drew from his pocket a small packet like a thin bundle of letters, and from it drew two photographs. One of them he put into the doctor's hand.

"It is poor Traill," said Dr. Vaughan.

In silence Drexel held out the other.

The doctor took it, uttered a sharp exclamation, and let the second card fall to the floor.

"Understand," said Drexel quietly, "this was not a confession. It was a discovery, and he did not indicate, even by a sign, this person"—he was bending to pick up the fallen picture; "but," as he laid the two side by side upon the table, "you see the resemblance."

Girard bent over the two pictures.

"Merciful powers!" he cried; "it's Elias Lord—and what a resemblance! and yet two more widely different men could not be found. But, again, the motive, supposing it to be Lord that he meant to kill?"

"That," said Drexel, "is the secret that is buried today in the grave of a nameless unknown, murdered."

"But, Drexel, you who have gone thus far, do you go no further? Have you no suspicions?"

Drexel was silent a moment, then, "I have a theory," he said; "but—don't press this point; for the present I must not touch upon the matter. Only, believe me, if it proves tangible, you will hear it; and this will be but the beginning."

CHAPTER VIII

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER

Mrs. Ralston did not take a house, as she had at first intended. For many years Mr. Lord, the millionaire banker and manufacturer, had been her stanch friend and adviser, had cared for her property, and materially increased it, and had in many ways proved himself a true friend, who counted no pains taken in her service. In the face of his urgent appeal, Mrs. Ralston could only turn to Madeline. And Madeline, knowing well how hard it would be for her to harden herself and condemn her old friend to a cheerless, winter fireside, treated the problem as a very trifling affair, and said gayly:

"Why, godmother mine, you would not rest in your bed if you were to refuse Mr. Lord. It isn't just what we expected, to be sure. Mr. Lord's big mansion is a wide contrast to the cozy, wee house, 'as near to Olive's as possible, that we have planned for so long; but it's a splendid abode, and we will try to live up to it. You can be a very stately dowager, if you 'make an effort,' and I'll be the Mrs. Chick to urge you on."

And so Mrs. Ralston accepted the chatelaineship of Mr. Lord's splendid mansion, and her conscience acquitted her.

The late Mrs. Lord had been her own cousin, and a sister in manner and affection. Already she knew the house, and felt at home in it.

And soon all was adjusted, and Madeline Payne, after five or six years of wandering, broken only by some

months of art study abroad and two or three visits to New York—always with her friend and godmother, as she had lovingly named Mrs. Ralston—was at last at home in the great city—thoroughly at home, with her own apartments, her own maid, and her own horses and groom.

One cloud only had cast its shadow over her otherwise happy home-coming. Claire Keith—bonnie Claire, from whom she had parted two years ago—was not among the welcoming group that awaited her. For more than a year Claire had slept in quiet Greenwood, and her husband and little son had found a home with Olive and Philip.

As Claire Keith, Madeline had loved the girl well, and she had loved her even better when, as the wife of Dr. Clarence Vaughan and the happy mother of little Phil, she had kissed her good-bye and sailed away for the last time. Madeline and Mrs. Ralston had mourned her sincerely, and they mourned her still.

But Claire, who had lived so bravely, died bravely too, looking behind the veil with a bright hope, and leaving for her absent dear ones words of faith and courage and cheer. There must be no lugubrious mourning for her—only the honest grief of hearts that loved her, and for the rest, bright flowers and pleasantest memories.

And so Madeline, when for the first time she had visited Claire's grave at Greenwood, with only Mrs. Ralston and Olive and little Phil, took with her rarest roses and strewed them there above the bed of her who had lived so well and fallen asleep so sweetly.

"Little Phil!" said Olive softly, caressing the boy's dark curls, "if you had been a girl, you would not have been Philippa, but Madeline; she"—turning her eyes toward Madeline—"had planned it so."

And Madeline kissed little Phil and cried softly.

Before they had been a month domiciled under Mr. Lord's roof, Madeline Payne and the elderly master of the house had become excellent comrades. They understood each other very well indeed, and Mr. Lord came freely and naturally to the girl with many things, pleasant, vexatious, puzzling, and otherwise, that he would never have dreamed of unfolding for the benefit of Mrs. Ralston, and in Madeline he found always an appreciative, interested, sympathetic listener, and not seldom a helper and adviser as well.

On her part, Madeline went to Mr. Lord for help of many kinds. He told her about people, and put them before her in a clear and unconventional light. He gave her the benefit of his views and theories, and even unraveled for her various political problems, national and local; for Madeline was a reader, a student, a constant seeker after new truths and old.

The library in Mr. Lord's mansion was a spacious room, well-lighted and splendidly equipped. It had always been the especial haunt of the master of the house, and was seldom approached, except when in search of its presiding genius, by Mrs. Lord in her day, or by Mrs. Ralston in hers.

Madeline, however, had found the cold and stately room greatly to her liking, and when she became assured that it pleased Mr. Lord to find her there when he came in for his hour or two before dinner, she indulged her preference unhesitatingly.

It was early on a sultry afternoon, and she was sitting near a shaded window, slowly wielding a big Japanese fan, and reading in a leisurely fashion a novel by a new and much-written-of American author, when Mr. Lord came in quite hurriedly, and flung himself into his accustomed seat, without seeming to see her at the remote

and shaded window; but finally he brought her a crumpled letter.

"'MR. LORD, *Sur*,' it began.

"It is spelled s-u r," she interrupted, "and that word is not often misspelled, even by the very illiterate, except in novels."

"'*This is to notify yew that onless yew withdraw forever that wicked and crewil sowcietty of tyrants that air banded together to oppress the poor and crush the layboring man, trubble will come to yew, and all yewr munny cannot purtect yew from* VEANGENCE.'"

"Well," he asked lightly, "how does it strike you?"

"This paper," she said, running her finger along the edge of the half sheet, "is good English letter-paper. The second half of the sheet may have had a monogram upon its face." She knit her brows and put the letter down, after a final look.

"Well, well!" he said again. And when she lifted her eyes she saw that he was now quite grave.

"Pardon me," she said; "you said something about a series?"

He started and dropped his eyes for a second.

"Yes," with a short laugh, "I did. I simply meant that two others have received the same or similar documents within the week."

"Of course, you will not answer unless you choose. Those other fellows—I should like to know if they were the same—copies, I mean. You said—"

"I said duplicates," he answered promptly; "copies, I should think—similarly worded, at all events. Why do you ask?"

"Because a woman has had a hand in that letter; perhaps not in writing it, but in some way."

"A woman!" he ejaculated.

"Yes. A man that would use that kind of paper would use a larger size. Besides," holding the crumpled sheet near his face, "what man uses Japonica for a perfume? And that is not all. Look at the letter. It is a masculine hand, but written with a lady's pen. See how delicate the strokes are, and how attenuated they make the big letters look."

"Look here," she continued, pointing with a firm white finger upon the sheet, "and here; see this spelling and this language. The woman who could frame that letter would have seen at once the incongruity between the language and the spelling, and she would have punctuated correctly! The letter was far from being the work of a fool; and a woman who was not a fool would be sure to possess that little, fine, seventh sense, which would guard against these errors of punctuating too well and spelling too ill."

"Oh!" he cried in a burst of admiration; "you're right, you're right! Detectives are born and not made. I would never have seen so far—nor any man. Madeline, I've engaged Vaughan for family physician; will you be the family detective?"

"By all means," laughed Madeline, little dreaming what was soon to come.

For a long time after Madeline had left the library, Elias Lord sat there wrinkling his brow in thought. Finally he arose and shook himself as if to cast off some troublesome idea.

"No," he muttered, "I won't; it would be pure nonsense. That affair and this cannot be connected. The letters are different altogether—and that was months ago. Heaven only knows where that came from! If I hadn't the proof safely locked up, I might fancy it all a dream or a practical joke. But this," glancing con-

temptuously at the letter upon the table, "is probably from some of those dastardly mill-hands. I won't mix them up. Jove! I shouldn't like to tell that story. I couldn't make myself appear well in it—I couldn't, really!"

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW HOME

Two weeks after their arrival in New York, Miles La Croix and his daughter were quite at home in the charming new house which had been made ready for them with that ease and speed with which things can be done in a great city, where energy is at the helm and a full purse at its back.

Miles La Croix had the tastes of an artist, and Moina blended those of artist and woman. Loving all things beautiful, and enabled for the first time in her short life to indulge that love to the full, she had entered with delight into the task of making for herself a dainty nest.

Up to now, La Croix and his fellow-laborers had seen each other seldom, and with the utmost caution. One day, however, Rufus Crashaw came to the house.

"Am I the first to see this new temple?" he asked, after some words of greeting.

"Not quite; Savareis has been here several times. He has lent his aid to Moina in various ways," said the host.

Crashaw frowned. "Was that prudent?" he asked.

"I think it will not prove amiss. Since you make him your messenger quite frequently, and he must of necessity come and go often, he may as well appear in the character of friend of the family. The presence of a young lady in the house will make his frequent visits appear quite natural."

"Humph!" The frown was still upon Crashaw's brow, but he did not pursue the subject.

"We have found a room suitable for our occasional meetings," he said. "The sooner we assemble now, the better. It would not do to go there too often. We must have a second rendezvous."

"Come this way." La Croix crossed the room and threw open the door of the small rear room, which Moina had called "an inner temple." "Here, you see, we have a room entirely cut off from any possibility of approach."

"Or of eavesdropping," added Crashaw. "And do you design this room for a second place of meeting?"

"Is it not a good one? This side street is very quiet. You can enter at that gate, and nobody need know that we are in session, if secrecy should be deemed necessary."

"Suppose, then, we gather here to-night?"

"I think it would be well," said Miles La Croix.

When Crashaw had gone, Moina returned to the studio, and standing close beside her father, said, after a moment's hesitation:

"I have been thinking for the past two days, papa, about the young lady we met on the steamer—Miss Payne; she asked me so cordially to call upon her. Of course I couldn't ask her to call upon me, as we had no permanent residence, and she waived all that very sweetly. So, too, did her chaperone, Mrs. Ralston. They hoped they might be of service to me, and I think they meant it. I liked them both very much, and—"

"My dear," he interrupted, smiling slightly, "did Miss Payne give you her address?"

"Yes; at least she gave the address of a friend, a Mrs. Girard. She told me that her plans were not definitely settled, but that she should go first to her friend's house."

"Then call upon Miss Payne. She was indeed most kind to you, and you are totally without companions of

your own sex. Did you think I meant to make a hermit of you, my daughter?"

"I fancied, on board the steamer, that Mr. Crashaw wanted me to avoid Miss Payne."

Miles La Croix started, and a shadow crossed his face.

"Moina, are you sure of what you say?"

"Yes, papa, I am sure—quite sure." She dropped down upon the chair nearest him and went on, as if determined to free her mind upon this subject. "On two or three occasions Mr. Crashaw broke in upon our conversation in a manner not to be mistaken by me, and on two or three others—" She stopped abruptly and cast a deprecatory look at her father.

"Go on, my child. Has he ventured to address you upon the subject?"

"Yes; and I ignored all such remarks as concerned Miss Payne or my talks with her. I'm going to say something else—it's unpleasant, and I feel—I feel ashamed to say it. But, tell me, please, have you noticed that he is much more polite to me—much more interested—and—and disagreeable—since I became my aunt's heiress?"

"My daughter, are you sure of this?"

The girl's head was lifted, and pride shone in her eyes and spoke in her voice.

"I have not been so fond of his society that I could well flatter myself or imagine such a thing. If the man were not so disagreeable to me, I should not have noticed, most likely, that he was exerting himself upon my account. I hope that I love my fellow-creatures well enough to work side by side, if need be, even with Rufus Crashaw; but to have him forced upon me socially, to have him take advantage of his connection with you to annoy me—papa, you must not permit that!"

"And I will not, Moina. The thought is as distasteful

to me as to you. I never anticipated such a thing. How should I? Rufus Crashaw!"

A red flush was coming over his face, one of his hands began to tremble. He got up slowly and began pacing the floor. Moina watched him for a moment, and then without another word went softly out of the room.

When she had gone, the old man turned toward the door which had closed behind her.

"I must stand between them," he muttered. "The common cur! How dare he! Rufus Crashaw, you may take my hand as an equal, but not hers. I have given my life to you and yours. But my Moina! I draw the line, if need be, between my life and hers. Mine you may have —hers, never!"

CHAPTER X

AMONG THE SOCIALISTS

Moina La Croix found this New York a very fascinating place, and her first call upon Madeline Payne the open sesame to many simple pleasures. The two girls were soon upon a most friendly footing. They drove and lunched and visited the parks together, and Moina found shopping in her new friend's company a fresh delight. In short, she was entering upon her simple social career triumphantly, having made conquest of Olive and Philip Girard, Mrs. Ralston, and Elias Lord, in turn.

As yet she had made no other acquaintances; but Rene Savareis, whose boyish frankness and good spirits she found quite irresistible, was now daily at the new home on B— street. He had set up his easel in one corner of her father's studio, and here for a time the two amateur artists painted a little nearly every day.

One evening Moina La Croix sat beside Rene Savareis, upon a hard wooden chair, in a not too conspicuous place in the big bare hall where the meetings of the Socialists were held.

Upon the long platform in front, bare and uninviting in appearance, sat her father, a splendid presence, but looking out of place in the midst of his surroundings. Beside him Rufus Crashaw and half a dozen rough-looking men were grouped.

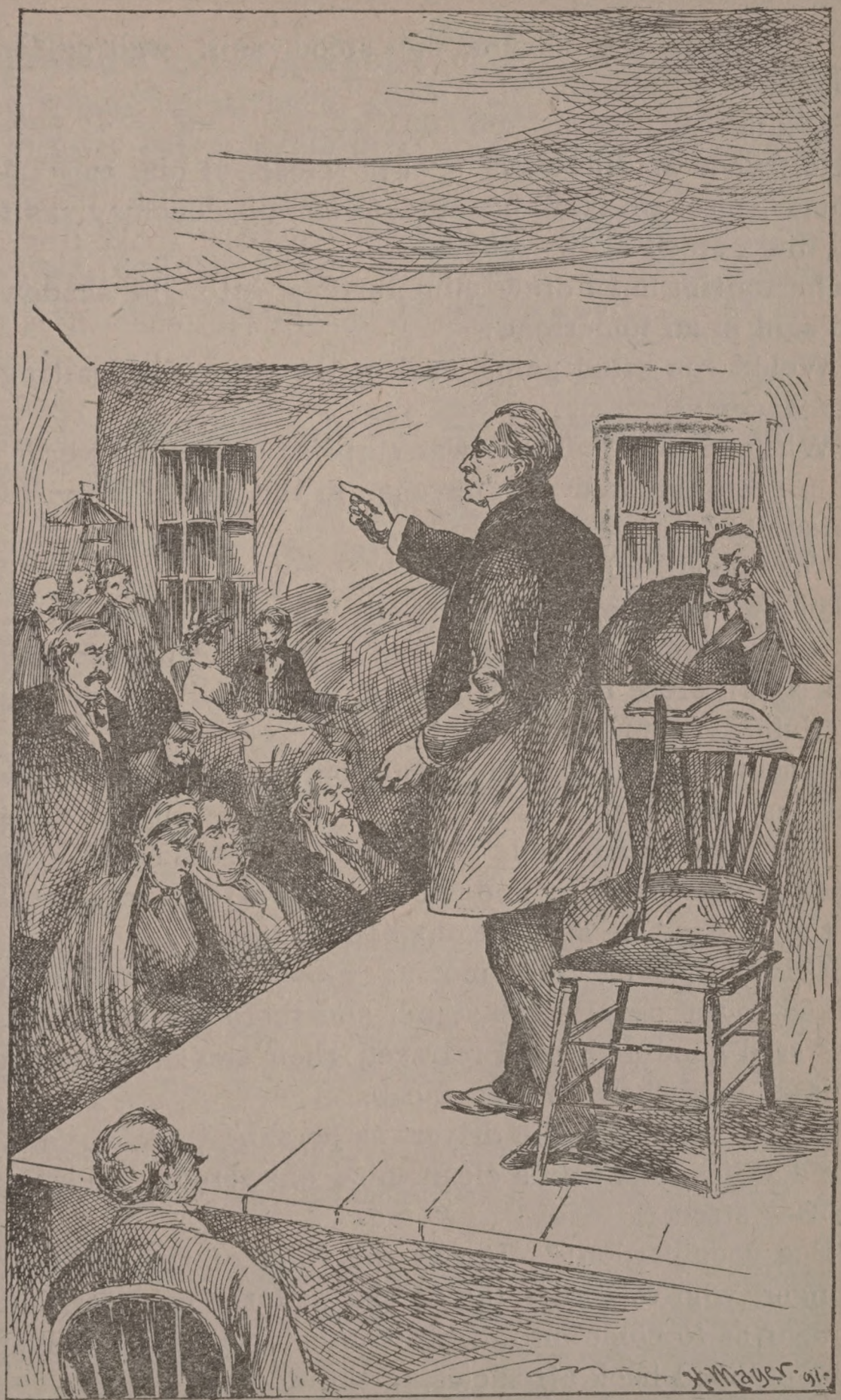
Several persons spoke out when Miles La Croix confronted his audience; there was a movement as of

aroused curiosity or renewed interest. And then began a genuine outburst of fiery eloquence.

The fine voice arose and thrilled, and rang down the long hall. The tall form grew more erect and pliant and commanding; the refined old face lighted with enthusiasm, the fine eyes glowed and flashed. He spoke from his heart to the hearts of the people; not statistically, not with learned detail, not in plausible generalities. He told of the joy of working for the good of our fellow-men; of the honor of belonging to an organized band of noble men—organized to uplift the weak, to protect the helpless, to right the wrongs of the oppressed here in our midst and all the world over. He told of the helpfulness of banded goodness and wisdom, and of the power of it. He told how all over the world, this noble brotherhood was growing, growing; how its strength was increasing until finally oppression must yield. The world must come up to its standard. Might must bow to right made strong, and right must prevail.

"Many good words are capable of better meanings," he said; "but one word there is that has no comparative, no better, no best. That word is 'Right.' It is our watchword. Bearing it aloft, we shall go on, and nothing that opposes the right shall stand. We shall sound far and wide our warning. We will speak gently, hope and pray. But the right must prevail, and the high priests and apostles, as of old, must stand ready, unflinching, steadfast. They must and will make way for the onward march of freemen—brothers in love, in hope, in life, and in death. Room for the new order! Make way for the right!"

When they were out upon the pavement, a man who had been observing her closely stopped and stood gazing for a moment after the receding figures of Moina and Savareis. Then taking up a position near the entrance,



"WE SHALL SOUND FAR AND WIDE OUR WARNING."—Moina, p. 70.

and a little in the shadow, he stood as if waiting for some one.

"Well!"

He turned at the word spoken close at his ear. A young man of pleasing countenance and slouching gait and dress stood at his elbow.

The waiting man drew him further into the shadow and said in an undertone:

"Would you mind going back without me and waiting until I come?"

"Without you?" There was surprise in the first words, and a good-humored acquiescence in the last: "Why, of course not."

"Very good; go ahead, then."

The two men turned in opposite directions, one striding away toward the avenues, the other elbowing his way back again close to the entrance, and finally inside the vestibule.

Presently a party of four came out, conversing in low tones as they made their way to the pavement. The waiting man recognized Miles La Croix, the speaker of the evening, Crashaw, and two of the platform satellites. As they passed he strolled out behind them.

Still conversing and moving slowly, the four men walked to the nearest cab-stand, and there the two satellites said good-night and retraced their steps, while La Croix and Crashaw entered a cab.

"Where to?" said the driver, as he shut them in.

And Miles La Croix's clear voice answered: "Number 900 B— street."

"Beg your pardon!" It was the voice of the loitering stranger, who was loitering so close to the cab at that moment as to come into direct contact with the driver as he stepped back after closing the door.

With a surly acknowledgment of the apology, the man

mounted to his place and drove away. The stranger stepped quietly back, and by the light of the nearest electric burner wrote in a small note-book the address of Miles La Croix.

"It's a dwelling, I'm sure," he murmured, as he put away the little book. "I'll look it up later. Now for Ken;" and he sighed as he strode away.

"Is it you, so soon, old man? Well done, and welcome."

The face of the speaker was the pleasing face of the young man who had parted from the inquiring stranger at the door of the lecture hall. But the garments and the bearing were not the same. The first had given place to well-made trousers and waistcoat, immaculate linen and a velvet smoking-coat, and the latter had become carelessly graceful.

As the door closed upon the latest arrival, the young man crossed the room with an unlighted cigar in his hand, to stand before him and to survey him with a laughing face.

"Upon my word, old fellow," he continued, "this is a lark—for you. I confess I don't understand it yet."

"If you don't mind waiting until I get off these 'insignia of rank,'" the other said lightly, "I'll try and help you."

He swept aside a heavy curtain and disappeared behind it, while his friend returned to his lounging-chair and lighted his cigar.

The room in which he sat was his own, and beyond it were two others, making an exquisitely fitted suite of bachelor apartments. All was luxurious, refined, tasteful. And the young man, who sat gazing about him with a queer smile upon his lips, looked the fitting master of

the place—a slender, blonde young fellow, with delicate features, handsome blue eyes, and a sensitive mouth.

As his eyes wandered about the room, the smile suddenly faded from his face, the corners of the fine mouth drooped, and the whole expression became one of sadness that was almost pathetic. He was looking at a little velvet case upon a bracket just opposite him. The case was closed, and a tiny key glistened in the lock. It was a picture-case, and no chance visitor in Kenneth Hosmer's apartments had ever seen it opened.

While he sat thus, the portière was thrust aside, and the man who had entered as a middle-aged working-man came out, middle-aged no longer, and no longer a working-man. It was a tall, muscular young man, with strongly molded and regular features, keen, dark eyes, a firm chin, and broad brow, who seated himself opposite his host—none other, in fact, than our friend Roger Drexel.

"Well, Ken," said he, are you thinking of that fiery old foreigner and his fine oratory?"

"No," said the other, rousing himself, "not exactly."

"Of course he pleased you?"

"Yes; and you?"

"Oh, I acknowledge his eloquence, and admit that I did not count upon anything like that when I set out with you to cure you of socialism. Sincerely, Ken, I feel my responsibility in this business. Why won't you be content to let all this alone, for the present at least?"

The other got up with an impatient gesture.

"I have told you why, Drexel. I must have occupation, or I shall grow morbid and worse. Why, in heaven's name, do you try to dissuade me now? We went into this thing together in our callow days, when we were full of enthusiasm and belief in the work. At first I was as rabid as yourself, only—"

"No, Ken, not quite. Three years ago I was an idiot, but I was honest in my ideas—I called them my convictions then. That's the only excuse I can offer for myself. Socialism was raging abroad then. Wherever I went—Paris, St. Petersburg, Heidelberg, even Florence—chance or fate threw me among those fiery, eloquent, foreign enthusiasts. I became the convert of a young Russian who was as gifted as he of the golden tongue. You know what he preached, and how I came home and preached it to you. We were to be a power for good, to bring about the millennium of right and justice all over the world. It was to be a new crusade."

"Was to be!" echoed Hosmer, impatiently.

Drexel was silent a moment, then he got up and stood before his friend.

"We have not seen much of each other during the past year, Ken," he said, almost wistfully. "Tell me, do you really believe that?"

"Believe what?"

"That Utopian dream of ours. Do you believe that the brotherhood can or will do these things?"

"Yes."

"You think that the hour has struck—that the right man, the right men, are at hand?"

Kenneth glanced awry as he moodily answered:

"I think that one of the 'right men' has suddenly gone wrong, or threatens to."

"And you intend to go on, Ken?"

"How do you mean?"

"Don't you know what I mean? Are you going to move with the rest—to act with them?"

"To act? Well, I'm willing enough, but I don't see much chance for immediate action."

"Ken"—Drexel came a step nearer, and his face softened as he looked down upon his friend—"tell me, since

I left you, almost at the threshold of the society, what have you done?—how much have you advanced? Have you been an active member, a regular attendant, or—"

Kenneth got up quickly and walked to the nearest window. He was silent for a long moment, then he spoke without turning:

"For two months after you left New York, Drexel, I was a faithful neophyte. At the end of that time—she came back!" His voice sounded husky, and Drexel started and involuntarily moved a pace toward him. "She had been away a year," Kenneth went on, "and for another two months all my time was given to her." He paused again. "Then came her illness and—her death. You know how it all was, Drexel; for months I never so much as thought of the cause, or of my brethren and their work. But when I did think of them"—he turned and came back to his place, "and went to them, it helped me to bear my burden—and to forget."

They were both silent for a little time, then Kenneth asked, still in the same tone:

"Drexel, have you wearied of the society?"

"Wearied? No."

"Why did you ask me to go to that meeting to-night?"

"Because I had heard you say that you had never attended one of those public demonstrations."

"Bah! what a coarse and common lot they were! And those orators! Did you know the old man was to be one of them?" He looked up suddenly.

"No; that was not in my programme."

"I see! you wanted to show me the repulsive side, to weaken me—to shock my inherent, aristocratic sensibilities, eh?"

Drexel uttered a short laugh.

"If so, I did not succeed."

"No; I don't know how it would have been but for

that fine old man and his fiery eloquence—La Croix, was not that the name?"

"Yes."

"Well, the bombastic man, the man of adjectives, and the man of statistics had rather dashed my enthusiasm, I confess. I was saying to myself, 'Mr. Kenneth Hosmer, these are your co-workers, your brother emancipators—how do you take them?' And I was feeling a trifle lukewarm—what, with having to hear them and to see these unwashed men and red-ribboned women—when that old man got up. As he sat down, 'This meeting, these wordy orators, are but incidents in the onward march. They will be weeded out or left behind. Only the worthy will go on to the end.' Oh, that grand old man! He has helped me. Once more I feel that I have still an object in living."

Drexel was silent.

"Come," persisted his friend; "this La Croix, who is he? Do you know him?"

"I? No."

"Well, then, don't you want to? Don't you admire him?"

"Yes; he is a powerful man, and a dangerous one."

"Dangerous! that man—how?"

"Because he is an enthusiast and an idealist. He sees all that is best, loftiest, most splendidly daring in socialism; and he cannot see, being the man he is, the evil and the danger and the petty aims that may, and must, creep in."

"Drexel, what's come over you?"

"I'll tell you, Ken; I am seized with a hideous sense of my own responsibility, of the harm I have done or may yet do. It was I who made you a Socialist."

"Yes, you did me that good turn."

"Let's waive that, Kenneth; will you do me one now?"

"I'll try."

"I am going away for a time, and I want to ask you to let this thing drop until we meet again."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you why; you must take me upon trust."

"By Jove! but you ask a great deal."

"I know it."

"I can't, Drexel." Kenneth came again and stood before his friend. "I'm pledged to go forward. Since I first became an associate I have stood at the threshold, but at the next meeting I'm to take the second step, and after that—"

Drexel made a gesture that was almost despairing, and for a moment turned away his face.

"After that I shall have no more to say," he said grimly. Kenneth laid a hand upon his arm.

"Drexel," he said, "tell me, are you going back?"

A moment of silence, then, "No," said Drexel; "and yet you ask me to." Kenneth reddened and withdrew his hand. "Let it pass, Ken. What we have said must be forgotten. You will not think of it again?"

"You knew that; but, old man, if you are not going to forsake us, what are you going to do?"

"Since you won't come my way, I am going yours."

"Really? Then you will come up with me. You will join the Second Circle, and we will go on together through the next and the next. Drexel, have you been quizzing me? Will you come?"

"No, Ken; that's out of the question."

"And why?"

"Because I have already taken the second step, and the next, and the next."

"What!" Kenneth Hosmer's face became red and then pale. "You are—then you can—"

"But say"—Drexel put out his hand; the gesture was

friendly enough, but his face was gloomy. "I have asked a favor. I have no commands to give—not now."

The two young men stood confronting each other, face to face; and two duelists would not have looked much different.

CHAPTER XI

MADELINE IS RETAINED

Roger Drexel, the young man of fashion, the lion and favorite of society, the possessor of a fortune; who was commonly supposed to have nothing to do and to be quite content to do nothing, was in truth a detective from pure love of adventure.

"The one thing that I insist upon is my perfect incognito," he had said to the police inspector. "If I were to become known as a detective, half of my usefulness is gone. If I do anything, you and your force must take the consequences—yes, and the rewards. I shall find my satisfaction in the work."

Between Roger Drexel and Madeline Payne there had existed, since their earliest acquaintance, a very sincere friendship, a mutual understanding that was perfect, and of a rare sort. These two young people, each possessing a strong individuality, and each something of an enigma to friends and acquaintances, were not such riddles to each other, and even where mutual understanding ceased, mutual confidence remained.

When Moina La Croix had left her, after spending a pleasant half-hour, Madeline gave some thought to Roger Drexel and an expected call from him. She was sitting alone in her room, thinking, with a serious face, when a servant brought her a message from Mr. Lord. Would she come to him in the library? It would greatly oblige him, and he would not detain her long. Hastening to the library, she found her host pacing the

room, a frown upon his face and a crumpled yellow paper in his hand.

"Oh, my little counselor," he cried, as she approached him; "you see how I begin to lean upon you. Look at this, if you please;" and he thrust the yellow paper in her hand.

"Why, Mr. Lord, it's another!"

"Yes," he assented quietly, "it is."

"Mr. Lord, do these letters cause you any serious apprehension?"

The banker brought a hand down upon his knee with pleased emphasis. "There!" he said, "you have brought me squarely to the point. No, I can't say that they exactly cause me serious apprehension; but I'll tell you what I said to myself to-day: 'Elias Lord, you are a reasonably cautious man, I hope, and you can be reasonably cautious in this matter without being particularly alarmed, and in spite of a good deal of skepticism. You have been threatened, warned, or whatever you please to call it. Probably it will all end in smoke, but possibly it may not. Other men—your betters, perhaps, and quite as harmless—have been shot in the back or stuck in the ribs by an assassin, and nobody seemed to know why. It's the part of prudence for you to say to somebody, Look, some one is threatening to do me a mischief. If mischief is done me, remember what I have told you.'"

"Do you mean," began Madeline, slowly, "by that, that you constitute me—"

"I mean this," he broke in hurriedly; "I have really little fear of this bugaboo, but I would be a fool not to give it a thought, knowing as I must, having ears to hear and eyes to read the newspapers, that cranks are abroad in the land, and that their present craze is for assassination. I feel strong enough to outwit any one crank, but

if anything should happen, don't you see, and I, out of self-confidence, have suppressed these documents, I am defeating the ends of justice. It is not every old fellow," he went on, "who is so lucky as to have a clear-headed young woman, with a natural instinct for affairs, among his friends. I feel perfectly safe in your hands." He leaned back in his chair and smiled grimly. "If anything mysterious happens to me, you will not go into hysterics. You will set to work as—as I would in your place."

Madeline's face was very grave now. She was silent for some moments, while he seemed to be enjoying her graceful, intent pose and the fine lines of her half-averted face. Suddenly she turned her clear, straight, upward gaze full upon him.

"Mr. Lord," she said earnestly, "if I were you I would put this matter into the hands of a detective."

"Bless us!" he cried, "isn't that what I have done? Look here, Madeline!"—he got up suddenly, and all of his fine, old-fashioned gallantry fell away from him in his earnestness—"I drop all question of ability, and make it one of inclination. Hang your professional detectives! I don't want one within a hundred yards of me. You're detective enough for me. It's born in you. Honestly now, did I make a great blunder in coming to you with this concern? Has it annoyed you?"

"No, Mr. Lord; don't think that for a moment."

"Well, then, has it grown monotonous? Have you had enough of it?"

"I appreciate your confidence, and if it pleases you to confide in me further, I beg of you to do so. I am interested."

"Now listen: if harm should happen to me, would you then regret having any knowledge of this business?"

"No"—clear and straight came her answer—"not if I might use my knowledge as I thought best."

"You may, I assure you."

"Then, Mr. Lord, do not hesitate to tell me whatever you choose." She took up the letter and read it again.

"It's not the same hand," she said.

"No; but it's wording is almost identical with the first."

"Yes; that, of course, was intentional."

"Yes; and for effect."

"Probably. May I ask how you received this?"

"Not through the mail, like the other. It happened at the bank—one of the book-keepers picked it up off the floor; it was folded as you see, but not inclosed in an envelope, and it was addressed—look on the other side—conspicuously large, you see. Must have been tossed in at one of the clerk's windows during a rush."

"Yes."

A servant parted the heavy curtains that hung before the door of entrance, at that moment.

"Mr. Drexel's compliments—and can he speak with Miss Payne at once?" he said.

CHAPTER XII

A SPY

Roger Drexel left Madeline's boudoir and the presence of the three ladies with a puzzled smile upon his face.

He had not been slow to recognize in Moina La Croix the young woman he had seen for the first time at the Socialists' meeting. That they should meet again, and here, impressed him as being somewhat odd.

He had driven to the door in a hansom, and as he ran quietly down the stately steps to his waiting vehicle, his observant eye noted the uncouth figure of a man who was slouching past the house and casting furtive glances up at the great windows.

"I want to watch that little man in the butternut clothes," he said to the driver; "follow him with the carriage if you can."

"All right, sir."

For some time the spy hung about, always keeping the street door in sight. But when it opened, and Moina La Croix came forth and walked away briskly, he withdrew his gaze from the house and followed the fair pedestrian.

For some distance Moina continued her promenade, but at last she approached a cab-stand, and entering a cab drove swiftly away. For a moment the spy seemed to hesitate, watching the direction taken by Moina's cab, then he turned and plunged down a side street.

"Ah, ha!" muttered Drexel; "he knows where she is

going, or thinks he does, and he is taking a shorter cut."

For some time the spy hurried on like a man who knows his way, then coming upon a florist's window he stopped, looked within, and finally entered, coming out a minute after, carrying a small basket of flowers. Meantime Drexel had left his carriage, and now followed slowly until they both came to a halt, the spy two doors from the house which Drexel knew to be the home of "La Croix the Socialist," as he mentally named him, and Drexel himself was nearly opposite, where he loitered carelessly. The spy moved slowly now and seemed to be seeking to assure himself that he had found the right number. He faced the house of La Croix, walking slowly and looking up at the windows. Then he retraced his steps, and after a little more hesitation, went up to the door and rang the bell. At the same moment a fleecy curtain that was fluttering at an open window of the second floor was drawn back and Roger Drexel saw, with a start of surprise, a girl's face looking out and down the street. It was the face of Moina La Croix and she yet wore her hat and mantle as he had seen her last.

Suddenly the truth flashed upon him.

"That was the name!" he said to himself; "La Croix was the name! I wonder if she can be that old man's daughter?"

Moina was gone from the window in a moment and she had not glanced near the street. Drexel now turned his attention back to the spy. A servant had opened the door. He could guess that a question was asked and answered in the affirmative, and the box was passed over to the servant, and the bearer turned away, going slowly until he had reached the street-corner, where he paused to look back.

Drexel, who was still his shadow, looked back also, and then he forgot the man he was following, in the sur-

prise of the moment. A carriage driven rapidly from an opposite direction had stopped before the La Croix house, and three men sprang out one after another, as if in haste.

The first man was Rufus Crashaw, whom Drexel recognized, having seen him more than once. The second man was slender and handsome, and he knew him, too, as the escort of Moina on the night of the Socialist meeting. The third he knew only too well—it was his friend Kenneth Hosmer.

"Already!" muttered Drexel; "confound their enterprise."

As the three ascended the steps, Kenneth and the handsome stranger going first, Mr. Crashaw paused a moment with his face turned toward the man in the butternut clothes, and Drexel clearly saw a signal exchanged between the two. In another moment the last three arrivals had been admitted, "as if they were expected," Drexel thought, and then the butternut man dived down the cross street and our detective hurried after him.

"At least, my butternut friend, I'll see where you burrow," he muttered.

But the butternut man made straight for the nearest saloon, and began to enjoy himself like one whose day's work is done.

After loitering in the vicinity half an hour, and assuring himself that the spy was really off duty, Drexel noted the name and number of the little basement saloon, and then taking the first hansom at hand, was driven back to Mr. Lord's, where he rang with haste and asked to see Miss Payne again.

Madeline came down and found him waiting almost at the threshold of the little reception-room, hat in hand.

"You will pardon my importunity I trust, Miss Payne," he began hastily. "Since leaving you this afternoon I

have found that, as a matter of duty, I must be in another place than here this evening. Even now I cannot stay to explain as I ought. But something I must say —something I must ask. In leaving your presence, not long since, I chanced upon a strange discovery."

And while Madeline stood amazed before him, he related briefly the discovery of the spy and the secret of his pursuit, omitting only the fact of Kenneth Hosmer's presence at the La Croix door. When all was told and Madeline continued silent, he said: "I have not told you this from any light motive, I beg you to believe. There is a reason, a strong reason, for my present strange conduct. Miss Payne, will you tell me something more of this young lady? What is her name?"

"Did you not understand? Her name is Moina La Croix."

"Do you know her well?"

"Yes, I think so." If Madeline felt surprise at these questions her face did not express it.

"And do you know her people?"

"I have met her father, who is, I believe, her only living relative—"

"And who is a tall, white-haired man, stately and picturesque—a foreigner."

"I see that you know the La Croix."

"I will tell you how well I know them; I must ask you to regard all that I now say as a confidence."

"If you intend to tell me anything concerning Miss La Croix—anything which she ought to know," began Madeline, and then added abruptly, "but go on, Mr. Drexel; you have my promise."

It was the sudden gleam of his fine eye that brought out these last words. It was as if he had said, "You forget that I am a gentleman."

"Some time ago," he began, "I chanced to be at the

close of a public gathering, very near to a lady and gentleman who were embarrassed by the crowd. I helped to make their exit a little easier. I did not catch the name as you introduced your friend to-day, but I recognized her as the young lady of that occasion. I also chanced to notice a rather unsavory looking fellow in that crowd simply because he was so ugly and crafty of aspect. I must make my story short, Miss Payne. Upon leaving here I chanced to see the same fellow watching this house."

Madeline was silent for some moments; then, "Do you really attach much importance to this affair, Mr. Drexel?"

He hesitated.

"I think it has its meaning," he said at last; "I hoped for a little light, a clue at least, from you."

"I have been thinking," she began hesitatingly. "I have an idea, based upon your description of one of the men you saw drive to the door. You say he was short and stout—was he also ruddy in face? In short, did he look like an Englishman?'

"Yes, I think he did."

"Then let me tell you how I came to know the La Croix. Sit down Mr. Drexel." She drew forward a chair and he took another opposite her. The look of perplexity was fading out of her face—a look of relief was taking its place.

"After all, perhaps it is only the folly of a jealous man, but all the same I thank you, Mr. Drexel, for your kindly interest in my friend. Yes, I see it all now, and I owe it to you to explain."

And she told him of her meeting with Moina La Croix on board the steamer, of their voyage and the growth of their acquaintance, and of Crashaw and Moina's aversion to him. When all was told, she added:

"Seriously, Moina ought to know of this; may I tell her?"

"I beg that you will not. It will make me look quite as much a meddler as this fellow Crashaw. If it is only a case of jealousy, it is clearly out of our province. And now I must go. By the way, perhaps I ought not to forestall Mr. Lord; but it is not a secret, I suppose. He has been made president of the R. M. P." He laughed lightly, but Madeline's face was grave.

"Mr. Drexel, is there really such a society?"

"Well, it isn't called the 'Rich Man's Protective,'" he replied; "although it might very well be. Yes, there is such a society, and it is strong in its bank account if not in its numbers. Some of our great merchants, bankers and manufacturers have organized for the protection of their business and their property. Perhaps after all it is none too soon."

When Drexel had gone Madeline sat down and mused with a troubled face. She knew how bitter Mr. Lord could be when aroused by the disunions of strikers, trades unions, socialism, etc. She had heard something of this projected organization of capital in its own defense. The objects of this new union she believed to be protective and if need be, aggressive. She had heard its possibilities discussed more than once. It was to bring together a great fund to be used for the protection of its members and their interests.

If such a society had really sprung into being, it was because there was, or seemed to be a reason for its existence; and if Mr. Lord was one of its promotors, its officers, was he not more or less openly arrayed against the trades unions, strikers, Socialists?

Viewed in the light of this discovery, the two anonymous letters took on a new significance. Yes, and Mr.

Lord's confidence too, stood forth in a stronger light. His reasons for choosing her as a "counselor" became more apparent. Thinking of these things, Moina La Croix was for the time forgotten, and Madeline set her lips in fine lines and paced the floor, studying upon this new problem. Elias Lord had not trusted this beautiful, courageous, disciplined woman without a good reason. Years before a certain Lionel Payne had made for himself a record as a detective, brilliant if brief. He died a martyr to his profession in the first years of his success; otherwise, the world would have known him and given him high rank among the detectives who bring to their work as much of genius as ever Mozart put into music, Rubens and Titian into their art, or Demosthenes or Cicero into oratory. This Lionel Payne was the father of Madeline, and Madeline was her father's child—his in face, and voice, and manner—his in courage, sagacity, clearness and rapidity of thought. Once in her life, while she stood at its very threshold, fateful circumstances had combined to test these qualities in her and she had been equal to the emergency. Fatherless and motherless, she had stood up single-handed against strong enemies, and had come off conqueror—conqueror of her enemies and over herself. Never, at his bravest and strongest, had Lionel Payne, the detective, shown himself braver and stronger than Madeline Payne, the detective's daughter, in her time of trial and danger.

"I must know," she said to herself, "first of all, how long the society has been in contemplation, when it was actually organized, and how soon after his elevation to office these letters came to Mr. Lord."

Meanwhile, Roger Drexel was communing with himself after another fashion.

"If it had been a man," he mused, "I should not have hesitated; but I have no right to shake her confidence

in her friend –at least not yet. I would give something, though, to be sure that Miss Madeline Payne would meet my confidence half-way. And then after a moment of silent meditation he broke out: "Strange how that girl and her queer surroundings have put all thought of Lord and his possible danger out of my head!"

CHAPTER XIII

PRINCESS SACHA

"Well," said Drexel, half an hour afterward, entering the office of a friend, "here am I, Captain; how long had your letter been lying on my floor in Rose street?"

"Since last evening, Hurst," said the captain. "I've made an appointment for you to meet a lady at the 'Occidental.'"

"Well, explain further—can't you, Captain?"

"There's very little to say. Yesterday a lady, young and beautiful, visited me, asked for a private interview, and told me that she desired to secure the services of the best detective the city could boast. She cared nothing about his price, but stipulated that he must be strictly a reliable, truthful man, and a gentleman."

"Really!" said Drexel; "and you have made an appointment for me?"

"Yes; I could do no less, really—and you are bound to nothing. The lady's requirements were such that no other man would fill the bill. She did not want a member of any force. She must have a man who was answerable to no one—a man who could give even years to her service. She had crossed the ocean to prosecute a search, she said, and was prepared to spend a fortune in it. She is a foreigner."

"Ah, indeed!"

"She makes one stipulation which is rather odd. The detective must be absolutely above suspicion of being a Nihilist or Socialist."

"MADAME," SAID DREXEL, "I COME FROM THE CHIEF OF POLICE.
—Moina, p. 94.

Drexel started and flashed a quick look toward the captain.

"Then I stand committed."

An hour later he was at a fashionable hotel, where there confronted him a vision of beauty clad in crimson, with luminous dark eyes and glowing cheeks—graceful, self-poised, a trifle haughty, and altogether fearless in look and attitude.

"Madame," said Drexel, "I came from the chief of police."

"It is necessary for me to be quite frank," the lady replied. "In my own country, which is Russia, I am known as the Princess Sacha Orloff. Here I shall be merely Sacha Orloff. I am come to seek one who is very dear to me—one who has, I believe, been foully betrayed. It is not a light thing that I ask you to do; and it may be you will have to contend with organized enemies—strong, powerful, dangerous. I am not seeking a living man, monsieur; I dare not hope to find him living. I am seeking to unravel the mystery of his fate—to know who have been his betrayers, his jailers, his executioners. Only show me how he died, and by whose hand, and the rest, the rest—ah, I shall know how to finish the work!" She shut her lips tightly, and her eyes gleamed while her cheeks paled.

"Mademoiselle Orloff," said Drexel smilingly, "you have not told me enough; I cannot decide upon so vague an understanding."

"We are safe from interruption here," she said. "I will begin: My father was Ivan Dreickoff, a Russian officer of the Czar. My mother died when I was very young, and I was consigned to the care of a good woman, one Madame Petralowski, a widow whose husband had also been a soldier of Russia. Madame Petralowski had one child, a son. We were of nearly the same age, and

grew up together as brother and sister. When Basil Petralowski was eighteen he went from home to study, and not long after Prince Orloff came to Moscow to visit some estates in that vicinity. Prince Orloff had been, it was said, in some sort a patron and benefactor of Paul Petralowski, the father of Basil, and he professed an interest in the son. He came to see madame, and he saw me. He came again and again. Then my father, who had not visited me for two years, came one day and told me that he had promised me in marriage to Prince Orloff. The prince was sixty and I was sixteen. Perhaps you know how we are dealt with in Russia. I was married to Prince Orloff, and my father soon after was elevated to a place in the royal palace by the favor of Prince Orloff. Monsieur, I will not dwell upon this time. We soon came to live a part of each year upon the great estate near Warsaw, and after nearly three years, Basil Petralowski came home. We met often, and resumed our friendly relations. I had never given up my good second mother, and I went often to her home. Monsieur, I charge myself with the ruin of Basil Petralowski, not intentionally, the dear mother knows. We had been as brother and sister so long, how could I tell that the prince would be jealous? But it was so. He was furiously jealous, and we quite unconscious of it all. There is not much more to tell, monsieur. One day Basil was missing. Search was made, of course. Many things were said. He never came back; we never saw him again. But once, months after, the prince, who was a wine-drinker and would say anything vile when he was filled with wine, let me know that Basil had been gotten away because of me—'removed,' he said; and he said that I would never see him alive again. Soon the prince died. He had found no new occasion for jealousy, and he was kind enough to

say that I had been very kind to him during a long illness, so he left me his fortune." Up to this time she had told her story in a quiet, suppressed manner, almost as if she were reciting some very dull details necessary to be known. Now she came and stood erect before him.

"He left me his fortune," she resumed, her face kindling to a fierce glow, "and I intend to make it help me to find Basil Petralowski, alive or dead."

"If I have understood you, madame," remarked Drexel, "this young man disappeared from Moscow. Why are you searching for him here?"

"Ah, true!" she said; "I have not yet told you that. Three months ago I received a line from him in his own handwriting. It was sent from this city. It looked as if it had been written and then carried about for a long time before sending. It contained a farewell—a farewell for all time; nothing more."

He was silent a moment; then, "You believe, do you not, that Prince Orloff knew something of this removal?"

"Did I say that?" she asked, quietly.

"Only by implication, madame."

"Then I will not; he was my husband."

"Of course you understand that, if I take the case, there must be no reserve. I must have a full account of many things. A single evasion might make necessary a journey to Russia."

"To Russia!" Once again she was startled out of her self-control. "But, monsieur, your work is here!"

"We will not enter into that now. Tell me, madame, why did you stipulate for a detective who was not a Socialist?"

But she was not to be taken off her guard this time.

"Why!" she ejaculated. "Ah, monsieur, if you were a Russian you would not need to ask that. Our Nihilist is bound body and soul to the cause he serves. Is not your

Socialist the same? I want a man who owns himself. Do you not see?"

"Surely"—he came and took up his hat. "Madame, I can give you no definite answer now; perhaps not for two or three days to come. There are other matters to be disposed of first. I hope that I may be able to serve you, but can say no more than this now. If you are willing to wait—"

"I will wait, monsieur, if I must."

Roger Drexel left the presence of the Princess Orloff, to return a few moments later to the office of the captain.

"I thought you would come back," was the captain's greeting.

"Yes," said Drexel, in a preoccupied manner. "Is your little Norton in town, Captain?"

"Yes, do you want him?"

"Him, or another of the same sort. I want a man sent to the 'Occidental,' where my charming possible client is stopping, and keep an eye upon all her movements until further orders."

Sacha Orloff, Drexel had already decided, was neither artless nor unsophisticated. She was a beautiful and dangerous woman; and thinking this, he drew out his little note-book, in which no record remained after it had served its purpose, and wrote upon a fresh leaf: "*Mem.* —To learn when S. O. came to N. Y. and all possible connected with said arrival. To communicate with Dolloway at St. Petersburg concerning same."

"I'll give that business a night's study," he muttered, and then dispatched a district messenger with the following note for Kenneth Hosmer:

"DEAR KEN: If possible, be at your quarters at or near midnight; business is important; time of value.

"ROGER."

CHAPTER XIV

DREXEL'S PERPLEXITIES

"I want you to do a little further masquerading, Ken, and this will be a more serious job," said Drexel to his friend that evening, in his own apartments.

"What in the name of wonder are you driving at, Drexel?"

"Just this. We have here numberless societies that claim to be with us in a vague and general way. Well, the command has come now to try our brethren, to see of what metal they are made. It is thought important, at this stage of events, that the depth and fervor of these enthusiasts be sounded. It is desirable to know how far these men will go if actual work begins, and in what direction."

"Do you expect to make a personal canvass?" asked Kenneth, derisively.

"Something like that. For instance, here," opening one of the papers in his hand, "the society whose name you will find at the head of this document has its rendezvoux at a sample-room. Well, you are to attire yourself as a tar, a tough, a tramp—assume any character that you can live up to for a few days and nights—and become one of its patrons. Become acquainted, make yourself known as one of them, learn their aims, their interests, what they expect the brotherhood to do for them, what they will do for the brotherhood. Are you ready to undertake it?"

"I'll do my best, Roger," rejoined Hosmer. "And to whom shall I report?"

"To me, for the present."

"It was the only way," soliloquized Drexel, when he had parted from Hosmer and was hastening home. "Kenneth Hosmer will come forth cured, and while learning his lesson he may be doing real work for me and for the society. Poor Ken! I wonder what he will say when he knows the truth? But no matter—it's the only way."

On the following morning he was prompt to keep his appointment with Madeline Payne. But it was Mrs. Ralston who came down to him.

Madeline had been called away quite early, she told him; Mrs. Girard had sent for her. Little Phil Vaughan had been taken ill in the night and had called for Madeline until, by the doctor's advice, they had sent the carriage for her. He was bordering upon delirium, the note had told them. When would Madeline be back? That was impossible to tell. They had just received a second note from the villa; Phil was growing worse, and for the present Madeline would not leave him. She had asked Mrs. Ralston to explain all this to Mr. Drexel when he came.

There was no help for it. Once more they must put off that interview. He lingered a moment to chat with Mrs. Ralston and then took his leave.

"Perhaps there's fate in it," mused the detective as he drove away. "Perhaps I am growing unnecessarily alarmed and concerned in other people's affairs. Perhaps I ought not to confide such grave matters to a woman, even if I do know her to be brave and capable. But I have put my hand to this thing, and I won't turn back. I must have help, and who can help in this particular place save Madeline Payne?"

For several days Roger found himself too much occupied to even think of Mr. Lord or Madeline. And so day after day wore away.

As soon as could have been expected, he received the reply to his message to Bollossy, the Paris detective who was at all times in direct communication with the Russian capital through a brother, the youngest of these Bollossys, all skillful detectives, and all more or less in political favor—one in Paris, one in Vienna, and one, the youngest and most reckless, in St. Petersburg.

The message informed him that Prince Orloff had lived at Odessa, and died there some months ago; that his wife, a beautiful woman, and the daughter, it is said, of a Russian officer high in power, inherits his wealth, which is enormous; and that this same Princess Orloff was now abroad, traveling for her health or pleasure. or both.

All this was briefly conveyed by Mr. Bollossy of Paris, and Drexel was assured that he would find Mr. Bollossy of St. Petersburg his to command in case of need.

Acting upon this hint, he at once put himself in communication with Mr. Bollossy of St. Petersburg, asking of him information as follows: Would Mr. Bollossy furnish him with a minute description of Madame the Princess Orloff? Would he obtain for him a brief and accurate account of the lady—her life previous to her marriage, and since; her standing at Moscow and at the Russian court? Would he give the name of her father, and explain his political attitude? What could he tell him of one Madame Petralowski, of Moscow—of her family and her past?

It will be observed that he asked no questions concerning Basil Petralowski; that he did not so much as name him. As he penned the last words, Roger Drexel smiled grimly. "Perhaps, after all, Madame la Princess, I shall

not be obliged to go to Russia," he murmured. "Viva the three Bollossys!"

At the end of five days he called upon Princess Orloff, and being conducted to her apartments was surprised to see a tall and slender old figure half rise from a low chair. It was a wan face that looked out from a frame of white hair, silvery white, and twined about the small and finely formed head coil upon coil. The dark eyes must have been dazzlingly beautiful once; they were pathetically beautiful now.

The hand that rested upon the arm of her chair, half supporting her, was white and slender. "A patrician hand," thought Drexel.

"This is Monsieur Hurst?" she asked in a low, tremulous voice; and then as Drexel bowed, she added, "you are expected;" and settling back in her chair she waved a dismissal to the servant. When the man had gone she sat for a moment regarding Drexel silently, then she arose and took a step toward him.

"M. Hurst," she said, with strong traces of agitation in her voice and manner, "I have heard much of you from my child, Sacha. She believes in you, now; so do I. Let me beg of you that you give us your help. My—my daughter is so anxious—it is for her sake—"

She stopped suddenly. A gorgeous portiere just opposite her was swept aside, and Sacha Orloff, a vision of Oriental loveliness in one of those trailing flowery 'confections' called, the saints only know why, a tea-gown, swept into the room.

"I thought," she began, with her eyes upon the lady, then, "ah, it is M. Hurst. Bon jour. Let me present you to my mother, Madame la Princess Orloff."

"Madame la Princess" bowed low to "M. Hurst," and coming nearer to the younger princess, murmured a few words in Russian dialect which Drexel did not under-

stand. The eyes of the two women met and then Madame la Princess moved toward the portiere.

"M. Hurst's business is with you, Sacha," she said in a louder tone. "I will retire."

She swept past him with a stately bow, but he could see that she walked feebly and that the hand which put back the curtain was tremulous. Then Sacha Orloff turned again to Drexel.

"You have decided, M. Hurst?"

"I have decided to serve you—yes. I will begin this quest for your missing friend very soon. To-morrow I hope to see you again, to talk with you at length."

In the corridor outside, Drexel met a young man, handsome, debonair, and softly humming a tune. They paused and each glanced quickly and keenly at the other.

"Superb man!" was the mental comment of the young man as he went his way.

"Handsome fellow!" thought Drexel, as he passed out. "Why, yes, to be sure," as it all came to him in a flash of remembrance, "the fellow I saw at the Socialists' meeting with Miss La Croix. It's the fellow who took Ken Hosmer to the La Croix studio. Is he by any chance a friend of Madame la Princess?"

Then the thought came naturally—was he going to call upon her? Probably—why not? Perhaps he lived at this same hotel. He was a foreigner also. He walked a few paces with slow step and listless manner, but he noted every movement of a little man across the street. He was not attired in butternut clothes to-day, but wore instead garments of that peculiarly dirty hue that is neither black nor gray. The man was a notable feature on Fifth avenue, but Drexel had seen him, and as he sauntered on he muttered:

"Oh! my friend the spy again. What does he here?

And what, and where, and who is the link between monsieur the spy and Miss or Mr. or both La Croix?"

The spy was walking slowly past the great hotel, and Drexel lingered long enough to see that at the corner he turned and retraced his steps.

"It is the house he is watching," he mused, stopping meanwhile to light a cigar. "Fortunate that I had the fellow shadowed," he added, and walked on, smoking, and apparently quite the gentleman of leisure.

CHAPTER XV

MOINA TURNS BUTTERFLY

One morning some days after the events last narrated, Drexel sent a note to Madeline Payne, asking her if he might wait upon her that evening; this message brought a prompt affirmative reply.

It had been arranged that Moina, if she came, would come early, and this she did.

There were no vacant places at the luxurious flower-laden table, and when they were seated Moina found herself between Mr. Lord and Roger Drexel, the latter being her escort.

When the dessert was at last before them, there was a momentary lull after much talking, and Mr. Fallingsbee leaned forward and addressed Mr. Lord.

"Mr. Lord, is it true that a strike is looked for in the Ormstock factories?"

Mr. Lord looked up quickly and knit his brows.

"If my voice controlled them, Fallingsbee, they might strike and welcome. I think it's high time for a new order of things. I heard a man say the other day that he'd like to make one of a union of employes who wouldn't have a union man in his service, and I feel like saying the same thing."

The start and the look of surprise with which Moina La Croix turned toward him was noted by all those nearest her.

"Why, Mr. Lord!" she said, quickly, "do not you believe in the working-men's unions?"

"I don't believe in the striking-men's unions, Miss La Croix. They are turning our working-men into rioters and loafers. The unions were well enough in their original intentions, but they're far enough now from their old standard. If this country is ever ruined it will be ruined by the working people!"

There was an unusual flush upon Moina's cheek and a fine light in her eyes.

"Excuse me the discussion, Mr. Lord," she said, with a faint smile; "I have lived much abroad, and have seen the oppression of the poor and the indifference of the rich, their task-masters. If I were a man, I should be a Socialist!"

A moment of complete silence followed this sentence, and then the stern look left the face of their host, and a smile appeared in its stead as he bent toward his fair guest.

"Let me thank you for that. If," he said, with old-fashioned gallantry—"if you should announce yourself a Socialist unqualifiedly, and should seek to proselyte me, I dare say you would hear of my setting fire to my own house and letting Mrs. Ralston and Miss Payne here starve in the street, while I struck for higher wages."

In the midst of the laughter that followed this absurdity, the dangerous subject was dropped. But as Moina turned away her flushing face, she met the intent gaze of her escort. Under cover of the laughing comment, she said to him half-defiantly and moved by some sudden impulse:

"Are you horror-stricken at my sentiments, Mr. Drexel?"

He glanced quickly about him before he answered her, in a tone quite as guarded as her own:

"I am delighted, Miss La Croix. There are excellent

reasons why I do not proclaim it from the house-tops, but I too am a Socialist!"

For a moment their eyes met and then Moina turned her face away.

When the ladies were again in the drawing-room, Mrs. Fallingsbee dropped upon a divan beside Mrs. Ralston and drew a long sigh of relief.

"Oh!" she said, in her naturally full tones, "did you see me digging Mr. Fallingsbee in the ribs?—yes, actually digging. He was going to make an awful blunder right on the heels of—" she checked herself suddenly—"of his first one," she added.

"How is that, Mrs. Fallingsbee?" Mrs. Ralston asked, faintly smiling.

Mrs. Fallingsbee turned upon her suddenly. "Have you heard of the Peasley business?"

"Peasley? No. What—"

"I knew it couldn't have got into the newspapers so soon," Mrs. Fallingsbee hurried on. "You remember how they burned his factory a year ago nearly?"

"Yes; Olive wrote about it."

"Well, next they burned his barn; that was not long ago."

"Mrs. Fallingsbee," exclaimed Madeline, "when? We did not hear of that."

"It can't have been more than four months ago. Well, now they have burned that fine new residence of his, and left a letter, threatening additional outrage, pinned to his gate-post with a knife."

"Poor Mr. Peasley!" sighed Mrs. Ralston; "how they pursue that man!"

"I'm very glad you didn't let Mr. Fallingsbee fire that shot at the table," said Madeline.

There was a sudden movement behind Madeline. She turned and saw Moina, who had been seated before an

easel of engravings, standing at her elbow. The girl's face was quite colorless now, and Madeline could feel how the hand upon her arm trembled.

"Pardon me; what is the name of this—this unfortunate gentleman?"

"Mr. Peasley—Mr. Acton Peasley," said Mrs. Fallingsbee, promptly. "There are so many Peasleys," she added.

"Oh!" said Moina faintly; "thank you. I—I don't know this—this Mr. Peasley." And she turned back to the easel. Her eyes were still burning, but Madeline, who watched her anxiously from time to time, noted that her color did not return.

The gentlemen did not linger long in the dining-room and shortly after their reappearance Moina withdrew quietly, declining all offer of aid or escort. A carriage would be in waiting, she said; and so it was. And Madeline, after bidding her a sisterly farewell at the top of the stairs, went back to the others in the drawing-room.

When the time for departure came, the guests set out almost together, and Mrs. Ralston and Mr. Lord came down into the reception-hall with the Fallingsbees and Mr. and Mrs. Girard and Dr. Clarence Vaughan. As he stood by the square table listening to some final remarks from Mrs. Fallingsbee, Mr. Lord glanced down and saw a little packet which he took up smilingly.

"I don't often do such a thing," he said, as he held up the packet, and then he lowered his voice. "The day after to-morrow is Miss Payne's birthday, and as I couldn't get out to-day I sent for—what do you think? Ah, there's some comfort in being an old fellow—eh, Vaughan? I can give my sweetheart a ring." He tossed the packet from one hand to the other. I shall submit these samples to—"

Heavens! what a flash! what a hideous, deafening, blinding report! What was that smell filling the place where already the smoke was stifling them? And what a horrible, heart-rending, heart-piercing cry! Then other cries, groans, shrieks, and the sound of falling bodies!

CHAPTER XVI

AN INFERNAL MACHINE

Roger Drexel and Madeline had remained behind in the rear drawing-room, after bidding their friends good-night. They were standing beside the mantel, and as yet had hardly spoken, when the explosion without startled them into instant action.

Little could be seen; but about the table the smoke was thickest, and two or three little tongues of flame were already reaching upward from near the floor.

Drexel's thoughts were swift to grasp the situation and he at once flung himself upon these flickering flames. As he seized a rug and pressed it down with a firm hand over the prostrate figure that was the center of this smoky horror, Madeline caught at the heavy cloth covering the table and flung it down where, almost at her feet, a vicious blaze sprang up. Then came a quick, stern order from Drexel:

"Put out the lights—quick!"

With a swift spring Madeline was upon the table and the lights above it went out. At the same moment those near the door were extinguished.

"Now let in the air—open the door!" came from Drexel, who felt assured that the senseless body beneath his hand was that of Mr. Lord.

"Lord," he said softly, "are you much hurt?" No answer; then, "Speak, some one—any one who can!"

Dr. Vaughan's voice broke the stillness, sounding strange and half smothered:

"I --I have not been hurt, only strangled with smoke." He began to cough.

"Don't stir yet, any of you," now commanded Drexel. "Be patient a moment. Fallingsbee, are you hurt?"

"Only a bit stunned," came the lawyer's answer. "But I think my wife—is killed."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Hush!" said Drexel sharply. "This is the work of a bomb. Doctor—" he paused, seeming to hesitate.

"I understand, Drexel," said the doctor's voice; "we can't strike a light yet."

And so for some moments longer, in fear, in silence, in hope, in despair, they waited for the light, while those who could see or think dreaded what its rays might reveal of disaster and doom.

When at last the paralyzed servant, aided by the doctor, had lighted the hall once more, what they saw was ghastly enough. Nearest the table lay Elias Lord, half supported now by Drexel's strong arm; hands and face were blistered and bleeding, his clothing about the shirt and shoulders was burned away, and the fragment of a little metal was still clutched in one tense hand.

Nearest him lay Mrs. Ralston, with a lurid scar across the pale cheek that was uppermost, and with the skirts of her gauze-like black gown hanging in charred fragments about her. She was conscious, and after a few moments of heroic and nerve-strung silence, began to move with pain.

Mrs. Fallingsbee, quite unconscious, was lying half under the table, and her husband, hardly realizing that he was smarting with two or three burns upon hands and neck, bent over her, chafing her hands and whispering her name in frantic appeal.

Neither Olive nor Philip Girard were hurt, but Olive had fainted, and Philip, not daring to hope that she had

escaped uninjured, was holding her clasped in his arms, waiting in breathless suspense for whatever revelation the light might bring.

Impossible to describe such a scene! Impossible to picture it! After the first swift survey Dr. Vaughan had said:

"They are all alive, but we must have another doctor here at once."

And Drexel had added: "And every one else must be kept out until we have investigated further;" then he had hastened to rally the frightened servants; and when Olive had recovered from her swoon, prompt action took the place of the paralyzed fear that had been made doubly awful by the darkness and doubt of the first few moments.

Mrs. Fallingsbee had not been touched by the fragments of the missile nor the flying bits of burning tow. But she had struck her head against the heavy table in falling, the fall having been caused by the shock of the concussion quite as much as by fright. Her husband had been struck by a fragment of the exploded metal and burned by the flying tow.

The tall servant, his hand upon the door opening into the vestibule, had been waiting the signal to open it. Dr. Vaughan had said good-night to his host and Mrs. Ralston, and was standing beside the footman at the door. Near him, Girard was helping Olive with her wrap, and so these four had escaped almost uninjured. Mrs. Ralston had been painfully burned, but had not been hurt by the flying fragments of the bomb. And Mr. Lord—with him the infernal machine had wrought frightfully. It was impossible then to gauge the full extent of his injuries.

In a surprisingly short space of time, coolness, clear heads and strong wills had made themselves felt

through all the shock and disaster. Drexel was ably seconded by Philip Girard, and while Dr. Vaughan, Madeline and Olive gathered about the injured ones, those two took all else into their own hands.

A second physician soon arrived, and then Drexel and Philip carried Mrs. Fallingsbee to Madeline's room, and after that, directed by the doctor, went to and fro sending the servants for necessary articles, and making themselves otherwise useful.

It was not long before Madeline came to their assistance, with cheeks pale, but with firm lips, keen, observant eyes and quick thoughtfulness that aroused Roger Drexel's wonder and admiration.

At the first moment, when there seemed absolutely nothing for her hands to do above stairs, Madeline went slowly down to the lower floor. Upon the second landing she paused. Just below stood Drexel. His face was in profile, and she noted for the first time how very grave and stern that face could be. He was looking down into the hall below, and after a moment's hesitation, she came swiftly down and stood at his side.

As she paused, the slight sound made by her trailing draperies caught his ear, and without turning, he put out his hand.

"No one can go—" he turned and checked his speech; "pardon me, Miss Payne, I did not know it was you. Were you going down?"

"What were you about to say, Mr. Drexel?"

"I have told the servants and others not to cross that hall needlessly. It ought to remain just as it is until some one can examine it carefully, and alone."

She drew a breath of relief.

"That has been on my mind from the very first," she said; "how glad I am that you have seen to this! Mr.

Drexel, don't you think that something ought to be done soon?"

"Yes," he said, with his eyes upon the disordered hall. Suddenly he turned toward her. "Miss Payne, do you not think that we have let fate baffle us once too often? Is it not time that we took council together?"

"Now?" she asked.

"Yes, now, before something worse happens."

She put out her hand and caught his own in a firm grasp.

"Mr. Drexel do you mean—is it possible—did you wish to talk to me about—did you anticipate anything like this?"

His eyes met hers squarely.

"Did you?" he asked.

She met his gaze and was silent.

"What I wished to say, then," he continued, "I must say now—and more. I must say something about this." He moved toward the room below. "I have done what in my judgment seemed best. A servant is stationed in the vestibule, to send any who may apply for admission to the side entrance. For the present this place will not be disturbed; and, before we take further steps, I must speak with you alone, Miss Payne."

"Let us wait," she said, "until we hear from Mr. Lord. It will not be long now. Dr. Layton has looked after Mrs. Fallingsbee, and showed my maid and Mrs. Girard what to do. Mr. Fallingsbee's hurts have been dressed and are not serious. He is with Mr. Girard and the two physicians in Mr. Lord's room."

"And Mrs. Ralston?"

"I have dressed her burns and given her an opiate by the doctor's orders. The housekeeper is with her." Some one came in right on the upper landing. "There is Mr. Girard," she said.

And then, as he saw them standing below, Philip Girard came down.

"He is still insensible," he said, "and they have turned us out, Fallingsbee and I. Vaughan says we need expect no change in his condition for some time yet, and Olive is anxious about Phil; I will run home and come back directly. I will bring a nurse with me, who will look after Mrs. Fallingsbee." He paused then and went down two or three steps. Then he turned back and spoke in a guarded tone: "Vaughan has said enough to explain to us the notice of the engine that wrought this mischief. Drexel, there's some work here for a sharp detective."

"Yes," assented Drexel. And Girard, after viewing the hall a moment from the lower stair, turned abruptly and went across the drawing-room, and so out by the side entrance.

Then Madeline turned to Drexel.

"Please go into the library, Mr. Drexel," she said; "that room is sure to remain in solitude. I will go upstairs, and if I am not needed I will come down to you at once."

CHAPTER XVII

SMILES AND TEARS

Moina La Croix had been more than usually happy on the day of the dinner. When she was arraying herself in the flowing silk and soft lace and adjusting the yellow roses, she had smiled happily at her reflection in the mirror and loved the world for its brightness and her own life for the capacity for happiness which it contained.

"After all, I think papa was right," she mused; "why may I not be happy for a year at least. I am so young and perhaps, who knows, a long life of suffering, yes, of sacrifice may be back of this bright little year that lies before me."

When later she sat at the glowing table and looked upon the kindly smiling faces about her, she said to herself again:

"If only I had papa here. I shall describe all this for him to-night. I'll try to make him want to come."

Then came Mr. Fallingsbee's unlucky speech, her host's rejoinder, her own hasty words.

It had all been carried off most adroitly, but the evening was not the same to her, after that.

She was glad when they were again in the drawing-room, and then she had been startled afresh by Mrs. Fallingsbee's words.

The fine new residence of Acton Peasley burned to the ground! Acton Peasley! How the name rang in her ears! Her evening was indeed spoiled now. She was glad when she could take her leave. She put on her light

wraps hurriedly and begged Madeline not to follow her to the lower landing. Mrs. Fallingsbee, who had come upstairs with them, was still in the drawing-room. Moina caught Madeline's hand, pressed it nervously, and sent her back to Mrs. Fallingsbee. Then she ran lightly downstairs, past the tall and slow moving footman and out into the vestibule. There she paused for a moment, and her hands fluttered about among her wraps and draperies. Suddenly she turned, went quickly back, without so much as addressing the servant, paused just a second to drop a fan, a filmy handkerchief, and a long glove, or something like it, upon the square table, on a step further, where she stooped to take up a veil which had fallen unnoticed as she ran down the stairs, then back again. The tall footman, looking with surprised eyes at the young lady who served herself so lightly and gracefully, saw her catch up a handful of things from the table, disentangle something, put something down, and then, in a moment, he was bowing low as she passed out and closed the door behind her.

"I must tell papa," she was saying to herself as she drove homeward; "I must tell him to-night before I sleep."

"Where is monsieur?" she asked of the little maid-servant who had followed her fortunes across the seas and who met her at the threshold.

"He is gone out, mademoiselle, with the English gentleman."

Moina sighed and went past her and up the stairs.

"Mademoiselle," said the maid coming after her, "I think he left you a message in the study."

"Take my wrappings, Margot," said Moina abruptly. And then she locked herself in her father's study, with a stern look upon her face.

"I'm going to look," she muttered as she turned the

key. "It's always that 'English gentleman' of late; he monopolizes my father. Sometimes I fancy he is changing him somehow; that poor papa is growing—different."

She flung down the white train that she had caught up in one hand, and swept across the room. Then she remembered her father's note and took it from the desk.

He had forgotten to mention to her a meeting of some importance which he must attend. He was feeling so much better that she need have no uneasiness about him. She must not sit up for him. He would not return until late.

"Poor papa," she said, dropping the note upon her lap. "I can see by the lines that he was excited and in haste —yet he remembers my antipathy and does not name the 'English gentleman.' And then she sat in her father's chair for a long time, thinking, with a serious countenance.

"I must know," she said at last; "I have a right to know."

She went over to the cabinet and opened the inner door. The cabinet contained a row of shelves well laden with various articles, and from among these she took a small ebony box, opened it by pressing a spring, and took out a bunch of keys.

Crossing again to her father's desk, she unlocked it quickly, seated herself before it, and took from among other similar books, the one she sought. She was familiar enough with the thin, slim volume. She had been her father's amanuensis so long that he would have been at a loss without her. She was well acquainted in a certain superficial way with the statistics and figures, the names and data contained in this little manuscript library, so much of its contents was in her graceful and singularly clear chirography. But familiar as she was

with much, there was yet much that she did not understand.

It had been her habit to unquestioningly copy, and to write from dictation. The work had grown mechanical to her and almost meaningless.

At first she turned the pages swiftly, merely glancing as they passed under her eye—then slowly, and at last very slowly, running her eye down each page before passing to the next. A red flush began to burn in her cheeks, her hands were beginning to tremble. Once she stopped and half closed the book, looking about her nervously. Then shutting her lips tightly, she drew a long sigh and resolutely turned the next leaf.

And now very slowly, like a school-girl, with a finger upon the topmost line, she began to read down the page.

"Oh," she catches her breath, and her face grows ghastly pale. She puts a hand to her eyes and shudders; withdraws it and looks again—"Oh, heaven!"

How long does she sit there with the book upon her knee? She does not think about the time; but by and by, she rises with a slow mechanical movement, puts away the book, locks the desk, replaces the keys in their ebony box, and closes the cabinet. There is no color in her cheeks now, no light in her eyes.

Like a somnambulist, she leaves the study, goes to her room, locks herself in, and sinks into the nearest chair. Again long moments pass and are not noted. By and by, she hears a carriage stop before the door. Her room is only lighted by the street-lamp without, and she does not stir when she hears low voices outside; more than two voices, she would have perceived at any other time. The voices came into the house; yes, and up the stairs and into the study. But still she sits motionless beside her chamber door.

Presently some one taps there lightly. She hears it. She is within a hand's reach of the door; but she does not answer.

"Mademoiselle! oh, Mademoiselle le Moina!" It is Margot but she gets no reply. She calls again, and still again—she even tries the door very gently. Then she goes away, saying to herself:

"How soundly these happy people sleep." And then she sighs. A little longer, and then doors open and close again. The carriage drives away. Then a slow step comes down the hall, a tremulous voice calls:

"Moina, my daughter."

Moina puts a shaking hand upon her quivering lips and catches her breath.

The steps recede as slowly as they came. Presently all the house is still. Then Moina gets up and goes to the window. She looks up and down the brilliant street and suddenly tosses up her arms.

"Oh, my God!" she moans; "is this how it is to end? or is it only the beginning? Oh, mother, mother in heaven—"

She flings herself down beside the window, and bursts into a wild tumult of sobbing, tearless passion—of all grief the most horrible to endure or to witness—grief that rends and wrecks and tortures, while no tears come to relieve the awful tension upon heart and brain.

CHAPTER XVIII

DETECTIVE HURST

"I am glad of this opportunity, Mr. Drexel," began Madeline in the library. "I don't know what it is you may have to say to me, but the thing which most nearly concerns me now is this attack upon Mr. Lord. I want to speak of it and of him, if your business—"

"My business, like yours, concerned and concerns Mr. Lord, Miss Payne. Only a part of what I meant to say ten days ago—what I ought to have said while I had the opportunity—has been horribly anticipated."

"Do you mean—" she began, and then became silent, while she gazed at him with astonished eyes.

"I meant," he said, "when I sought an interview with you, to tell you something that had come to my knowledge concerning Mr. Lord, and I also meant, if I could obtain your promise of secrecy, to confide to you certain matters concerning myself; and last, to ask for your cooperation, for a prolonged consultation. We must act."

"I want you to help me in this. I want you to find and bring me a detective."

"I came here to-night prepared for this interview," he said; "I am about to commit myself. Have I your promise of secrecy?"

"Yes, if my word is enough."

"Your word is enough. Have you happened to hear of one, Hurst?"

"Hurst the detective? indeed I have! But I hardly dare hope to secure his help."

"You may, for Hurst and Mr. Roger Drexel are one and the same."

Madeline was silent for a long moment. When she spoke, her words were characteristic.

"After all I am not so much astonished as I ought to be. You have been something of a riddle to me always, and this is the solution. I begin to understand," she said, finally. "As a detective you had learned something concerning Mr. Lord, and you wanted to get further evidence from me."

"I wanted your co-operation," he corrected.

"Mine!"

"Yours. I will be brief and frank. I had learned that Mr. Lord had identified himself with the new league of the capitalists, as against the banded Socialists and strikers. I knew his out-spoken hatred of these people and that he was making himself a marked man because of his openly avowed sentiments. I wanted to stand between him and harm, if possible, and I wanted a confederate with me in the camp."

"I see," said Madeline, thoughtfully.

"Lately," Drexel went on, "I have feared that already Mr. Lord has been set down among the proscribed."

"And now," she said, "I have a story to tell—a confidence."

"I will regard it as such."

"Mr. Lord has been warned twice at least," she said.

"Ah! Tell me all that you know or guess."

In a few swiftly spoken, well-chosen words she told of the two anonymous letters, of her interview with Mr. Lord and the charge he had given her.

"Miss Payne," said Drexel, "I mean to do my utmost in this matter; but I have other affairs of importance, which I can not, dare not, neglect. In this and in other matters, I need just such help as you could give if you

would. I must have a woman's help. There is no woman who could help me as you can, if you will. One of the profession would be useless to me. No one else could do what I ask of you. Where Mr. Lord and his affairs are concerned we are to be allies, are we not?"

"Yes," answered Madeline simply.

"I will take you at your word and we will begin in earnest now. Will you be so kind as to call in your servant who opened the door to your guests?"

She went out, and returned a moment later, followed by the footman. Harvey, who was an importation and a model of his clan, was a man of middle age, with a tall figure, an acquired air of dignity which sat upon him well, and a face of expressionless calm. He could not remember having seen the box that exploded that day.

"I don't think any one went near the table until the flowers came," he said, finally.

"Oh, the flowers?" exclaimed Drexel.

"Yes, sir. They came late; a big basket of cut flowers, and a lot of tiny bunches, sir. He told the boy to put 'em down on the table so as not to 'andle them much. And they was took from there, almost immediately, to the dining-room."

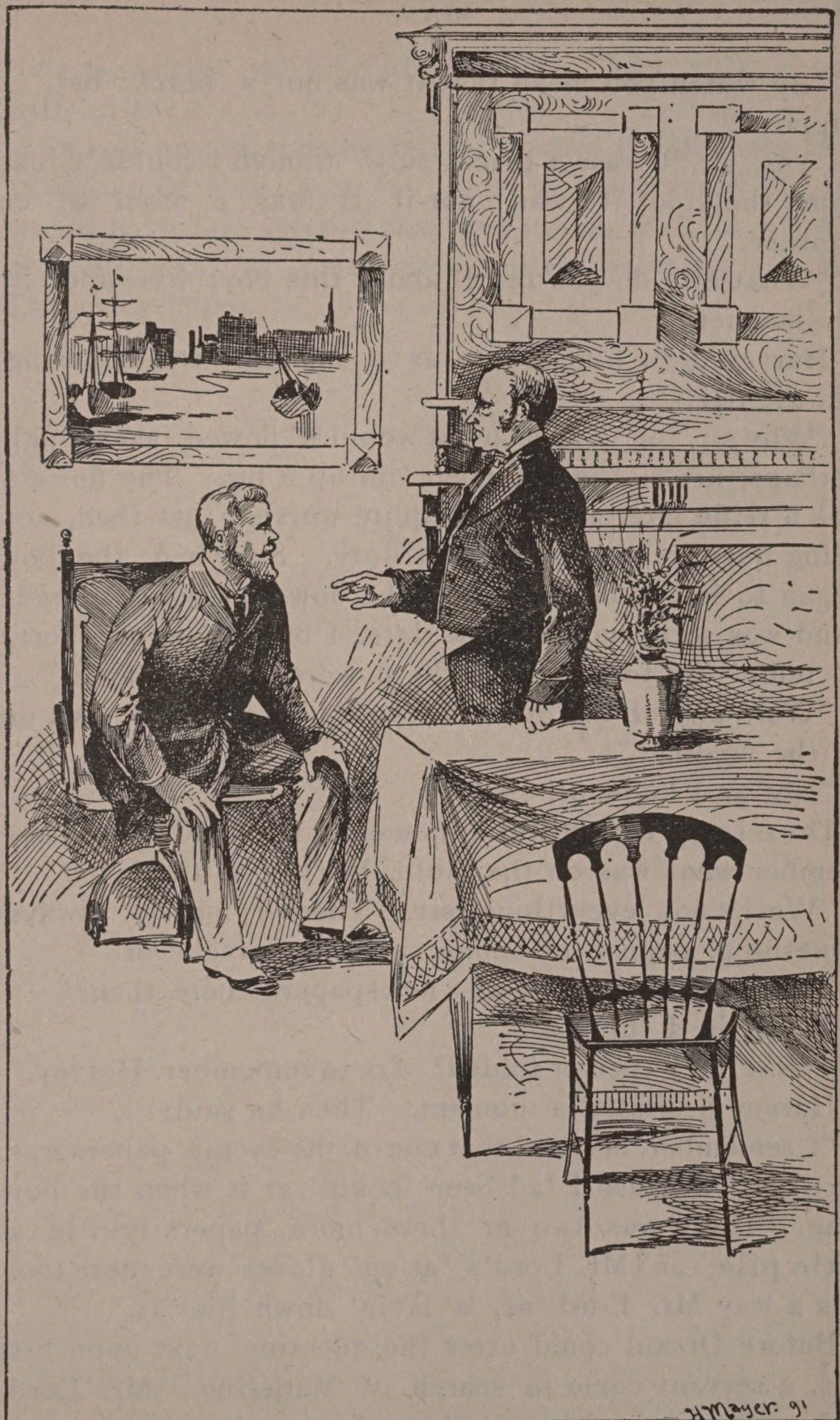
"Can you describe the person who brought the flowers?" asked Drexel.

"It was a boy habout 'alf-grown, I should say. I didn't notice him particular."

"And you can only remember that the boy was 'half-grown?' Try to recall his appearance, Harvey."

Harvey pondered a moment.

"Well, sir, I can't say anything habout 'is face—that's a fact; but yes, he certainly was dressed in light clothes; anyways a light coat. And he wore a 'at that wasn't either very light nor very dark."



"CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PERSON WHO BROUGHT THE FLOWERS," ASKED DREXEL.—Moina, p. 122.

"By which you mean that it was not a black hat, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, it wasn't black, sure; though I couldn't just name the color it was, nor if it was a wool 'at or another."

"What else do you recall about this boy; his speech, his manner?"

Harvey drew himself up as if suddenly remembering his dignity.

"Why sir, for 'is speech—it would 'a' flowed fast enough perhaps, hif I 'adn't hurried 'im up a bit. The flowers was a trifle late, and I was quite worried just then, not being quite ready to stand at duty. So when the boy began to say as he'd brought the flowers aswas ordered, hand was sorry habout bein' late, I broke 'im off short, by tellin' 'im to put down the flowers hon the table."

"Were any of the other servants here—in the hall or on the landing?"

"Not as I know of, sir."

Drexel was thoughtful a moment, then, "Can you remember what was on the table, Harvey, at the time?"

"Well, not everything, sir. There's mostly always something, papers, or books, or little parcels, or—"

"Were there any papers—newspapers there then?"

"Yes, sir, I think so."

"Were they open or folded? Try to remember, Harvey."

Harvey hesitated a moment. Then he said:

"I remember, certain, that one of the evenin' papers was part open because I 'ad been lookin' at it when the boy rang. There was two or three more papers lyin' in a little pile; an' Mr. Lord's 'at an' gloves were there too. It's a way Mr. Lord 'as, 'a' layin' down his 'at."

Before Drexel could utter the question next upon his lips, a servant came in search of Madeline. Mr. Lord had revived enough to speak. and had asked for her.

"I must go," she said to Drexel. "You will go on with this?"

Drexel bowed and himself held open the door for her. If she could have seen his face as he closed it, she would have felt assured that her going, at this special moment, was, for some reason, quite satisfactory to "Mr. Detective Hurst."

CHAPTER XIX

A BASKET OF FLOWERS

"Harvey," said Drexel when he had resumed his seat, "your memory is proving very serviceable. I hope your remember who came next—I mean after the boy from the florist's?"

"It was Miss La Croix, sir."

There was a slight variation in the manner of the detective's next question, a scarcely perceptible change in his face.

"Don't misunderstand me, Harvey, if I question you about this lady and the other guests. We must know just what happened at or about that table. Did Miss La Croix approach it?"

Harvey's voice took a lower tone. There was a half-scared look on his face. "She did, sir," was all he said.

"Well, and how—what did she do or say?"

"She asked me very kindly, sir, if she was the first, and I said yes; and she swept up the hall, smiling as if something pleased her very much, and stood by the table and put down 'er fan and—and some little things."

"What little things, Harvey?"

Drexel's tone had changed from grave to stern. Harvey had spoken this last sentence slowly, as if weighing his words. "I see you were observant where this young lady is concerned; what did she put down beside the fan?"

"Well, sir, she 'ad a long veil in her 'and. One end was wrapped about something, a parcel or maybe a box—"

"Wait; which was it now, a box or a parcel?"

"A box, or shaped like one, sir."

"And of what size?"

"Well, sir, Hi sh'd say habout six or seven inches long by 'alf as wide, and as thick as my two 'ands, sir. Has I said, one end of the veil was sort of twisted round, more than 'alf hidin' it, and the other end was floating loose-like as she moved."

"Now, who went out first when the guests departed?"

"Miss La Criox was the first, sir."

"Did you notice her manner, particularly?"

For a full moment Harvey was silent. Then something in Drexel's face seemed to stimulate his speech.

"Miss La Croix, sir, seemed to be in 'aste. She hurried down to the vestibule and then missin' her veil I suppose, she turned, ran back, stopped at the table a moment and, I think, put down 'er glove or fan or something, and picked up 'er veil from the floor before I noticed that she had dropped it, sir."

"Was it not your business to notice such a thing and to restore it?"

"Certainly, sir; but she came down the stairs very swiftly and the veil must 'a' fallen as she came. It was so near the color of the rug, sir, that I didn't know why she turned back so suddenly, till I saw her take it up."

"Then you didn't see it fall?"

"No, sir."

Some one tapped lightly, and then opened the door. It was Madeline. She looked excited and anxious but did not speak.

"You may go, Harvey," said Drexel.

When the man was gone, each waited for the other to speak. Finally Madeline asked: "Have you made a beginning?"

"Perhaps. I hardly know. Are you at my disposal now?"

"For a little while, yes."

"You have seen Mr. Lord?"

"Yes. But he is not permitted to talk. I think there is something he would like to say, if he could. He was anxious to know if anything was being done, and he has made a request."

"Ah!"

"He wants us, if it is possible, to keep this night's work out of the papers. He wants us to let it pass as an accident. Do you think it could be managed?"

"We will see. Fortunately all are friends here. I learn from Harvey, that a little while before your guests began to assemble, a boy came to the door with flowers. He came, strange to say, to the upper door, and Harvey bade him place the flowers upon the table."

"Oh!"

"Which he did, retiring at once. Harvey does not describe the boy very accurately, and I wish you would see if some of the other servants may not have caught a glimpse of that same boy. You will know how to do this."

"I will try," she says. And then after a moment's thought, "Yes, I will manage it and without loss of time."

CHAPTER XX

CONFIDENCES

The result of Madeline's investigations below stairs was somewhat startling to both herself and Drexel.

A few, adroitly-put questions brought out a statement from one of the women-servants which directly contradicted one of Harvey's

It concerned the boy from the florist's.

The woman had been standing for some moments near the servant's entrance, the upper door of which was of glass. She was looking, she said, in behalf of cook, who had sent out hastily for something forgotten until the last moment, and she was just thinking she would run out herself, for cook was in a great bother," when she chanced to see the head of a boy above the railings.

He was carrying something, and at first she fancied it might be cook's condiments come in the nick of time. But a second glance showed her that the boy was loaded down with flowers. He halted just opposite her and looked up at the house, as if in doubt; then something ahead of him, the woman could not see what, seemed to catch his eye and he moved forward at a quick pace, and the flight of steps hid him from view.

It was the boy who brought the flowers, the woman was sure of that. True, she did not see him ascend the front steps, but the flowers were the same, she was certain. Ten minutes before she saw this boy, the flowers had not arrived; going upstairs, not two minutes after, she found the flowers were in the dining-room. But here

the complication began. The eyes of the woman were quick and keen, and she was able to describe the boy.

"He carried the basket straight in front of him," she said, confidently. "He was a slim little fellow and pale. He was dressed in black and wore a tight, little black cap on his head."

Neither doubts nor questions could shake her confidence in the evidence of "her own eyes." She adhered to the black clothes and the cap, being confronted with the footman only made her the more positive. In spite of his affirmation that the boy from the florist's wore a light jacket and "some kind of a 'at," she clung to the evidence of her own two eyes, and to the slim boy, the black clothes, and the black cap.

And here, so far as it concerned Mr. Lord's servants, ended the investigation.

"How do you account for their widely different descriptions?" asked Madeline of Drexel. "I confess to some annoyance, for I have believed in both Harvey and Mrs. Marvin. I don't know now which one to doubt."

"Then doubt neither," was his response; "this complication is a trifling one, compared to those we are likely to encounter. In due time I shall investigate at the florist's. In the meantime, it will be well for you to keep an eye on both Harvey and the woman."

To keep the truth concerning the explosion and its results out of the newspapers looked at first like a difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, it was accomplished.

The seravnts were taken in hand by Drexel and Madeline. Some of them had not been long in the house, but all had been well treated and were becoming more or less attached to the inmates. Drexel could be imperative upon occasions, and Madeline was very liberal, while asking their silence as a favor. With the exception of Harvey, who had been dispatched for an assist-

ant by Dr. Vaughan, none of them had been out of the house. Madeline and Drexel felt quite sure that, as far as the servants were concerned, there was little to be feared.

In the early morning Dr. Vaughan, Mr. Fallingsbee, Philip Girard, and Roger Drexel took counsel together.

Mrs. Fallingsbee was suffering from the blow upon her head, and would for some days. But it was not a dangerous hurt, and it would be quite safe to remove her to her own home that afternoon.

Mr. Fallingsbee's left hand was swathed in bandages, and he had an ugly scar upon his neck. But he made light of these evidently painful souvenirs of Mr. Lord's little dinner, and pronounced himself quite able to baffle inquiry and account satisfactorily for his injuries.

Mrs. Ralston had not escaped so easily. A bit of flying tow had ignited her soft garments, and one limb had been severely blistered, while her hands in catching at her burning draperies had also been wofully scorched. It would be many days before she could use them again. It was decided that she should be removed to the home of the Girards, lest the fact that there were two patients in the house, should give rise to undesirable inquiries. And for two weeks, those who asked for Mrs. Ralston at Mr. Lord's door were informed by the obliging Harvey that Mrs. Ralston was absent and not likely to return for a week or more.

As for Mr. Lord, he lay in his darkened room, swathed in cotton and bandages, beyond recognition. There were wounds and burns upon chest and shoulders, hands, face and neck; some serious and almost frightful.

There was good hope of his recovery, and possible danger from fever, inflammation, gangrene. But should

he live to be a centenarian, he would be a man of many scars, to the end of his days.

He was not permitted to talk—rather, he would not have been, had he made the attempt. But, between his wounds and his bandages, talking was both painful and difficult, and he did not readily recover from the dazed mental condition brought about by the shock of the explosion. Added to this, was the weakness from pain and loss of blood. He had made one effort, with some vague ideas of what he should say to Madeline. But she had anticipated him, by whispering that already she had taken steps to get the matter in the hands of a detective. And when she begged him to leave everything to her and not to exert himself, he was only too glad to close his swollen eyelids, and whispering his wish to keep the affair out of the newspapers, subside into silence and narcotized rest.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day, Madeline aand Drexel were seated together in the partially darkened library, talking in low tones. They had been thus occupied for a long hour, and Madeline's face was still alive with the mixed emotions roused by the interview, during which she had been, for the most part, a listener.

"And now," he was saying as if concluding some narrative, "I think you know everything. At least I think that we understand each other."

"If we do not," said Madeline, gravely, "it shall not be my fault. You have given me much to think of, Mr. Drexel. It is a grave responsibility to be put in possession of secrets such as these, but do not fear that I regret the responsibility thrust upon me. If I were a man, I hope I should have done what you have done. I

am afraid you overrate my ability. But, such as it is, you may count upon it."

"Thank you;" he rose and put out his hand. "I could ask nothing more. And now that everything is understood, I will set my agents at work." He turned to go.

"One moment." She was standing close beside him. "Do not misunderstand me. I see the reason, the necessity for all you have done and propose to do, but I have not given up my faith in her. I hope and expect to see her vindicated."

"You are a friend, indeed," he replied. "Believe me I will work for her vindication. Do you not see that the very course we have adopted will lead to her vindication? if she is innocent it's the only way, in fact."

"Yes, I see that. And I have already written her, as you suggested. Oh, do not fear for me. Having made up my mind, I can play my part."

"If I had ever doubted that," he said, "we would not be in council now."

CHAPTER XXI

MOINA'S STRUGGLE

Moina La Croix could hardly have told just how she passed that long night, after she had heard the footsteps, first of her maid and then of her father, turn from her door and die away in the stillness below. It was a night of bitter grieving, of rebellious sobs and tears, and of little calm thinking. At last, when the "small hours" were growing large again, as measured by the strokes of a great clock not far away, nature and youth conquered, and she fell asleep. When she awoke the sun shone broadly in at her windows, and the sounds of active life came loudly up from the street.

It seemed to her that the Moina of yesterday and the Moina of now are a life-time apart. Yesterday she was serious, busy, yes, anxious about a silken gown! To-day, her heart is like lead in her bosom; silken gowns are as naught. What has wrought this swift change?

Ah, Moina La Croix, yours is not the first soul to be shocked to despair, and to rebel at being suddenly forced from your charming, mystical, far-off view of the ideal, and set face to face with the real, the near, and the now.

Suddenly she sprang up and began a hasty toilet. She could not move fast enough, and she did not want Margot. Her eyes were hurried. Her cheeks flushed. How plain it all seemed to her now. Her father was not a plotter. He was an evangelist. It was not he who had planned these horrible things—this burning of

property, this terrorism. It was that wretch Crashaw. Her father was innocent of it all; innocent and ignorant. And last night she would not see him, that dear, high-minded, clear-souled papa! Last night she had presumed to sit in judgment upon him—she!

But she would see him now; and it could not be quite enough! She paused with one slim slipper half on. What would she say to him? Would she dare speak of Crashaw, question him, warn him? Just then a shrill voice beneath her window caused her to start and let the little slipper fall, unheeded.

"Mornin' papers—all about the big strike! Soldiers called out! Big meetin'—of so-cial-ists!" The voice ended in an ear-splitting, upward tone. Another newsboy would have understood that the shrieker had been hailed by a customer.

Moina flew to the window. It was Margot, upon the doorstep, who had beckoned the boy toward her. She was holding out her hand for a paper.

"Margot," called down Moina, "get all of them, one of each."

Margot nodded and Moina withdrew from the window. A new thought had seized upon her mind, driving out all else. She would know for herself. She would read the papers. She would study the question of socialism in its American aspect. And she would not yet speak to her father about those lists of names, where, against some of them, a blue cross stood penciled. Yes, she would know; and however she might seem to doubt Crashaw, yes and the brotherhood itself, she would not doubt her father.

"It's his religion," she murmured as she prepared to leave her chamber—"it's his religion, and he lives up to it, not down."

CHAPTER XXII

HIS THREE WARNINGS

For four days, Mr. Lord lay secluded from all save the doctors and nurse. On the fourth day he began to fret under the restraint put upon him, and on the morning of the fifth, some of the confining bandages were removed and their replacement pronounced unnecessary.

"Look here," said the patient to Dr. Vaughan, "I want to see Miss Payne. Prop me up somehow and give me something to ease or numb this smarting. If I can talk with her for twenty minutes, I'll get something off my mind that won't let me rest, and then you can have your chance."

Madeline, informed of this, repaired to the library, where, seated at Mr. Lord's desk, she wrote the following message to Roger Drexel:

"Mr. Lord is to receive me to-day, in two hours or less. If possible come before that time."

Drexel was prompt to answer her summons, coming up the steps just as Dr. Vaughan, having completed his task and administered the soothing draught, was coming down. The two men stopped, shook hands and exchanged inquiries.

"How is the patient?"

"Better, I think, but inclined to fret. I have consented to his talking with Miss Payne a little. He seemed to make a point of it. But he sees no other visitors."

Drexel smiled.

"Is that meant for me?" he asked.

"Was it needed?" The doctor's answering smile was somewhat constrained.

"Well, not greatly. My visit is to Miss Payne."

For an instant the eyes of the two men met smilingly. Then as each went his way, Drexel's became grave and absorbed, while those of Clarence Vaughan wore a look of pain.

Madeline, standing at a drawing-room window, saw the meeting and the parting of the two, unseen by either; and she saw, too, the face of each as they turned away.

"Can anything have come between them?" she thought. "Oh, I hope not." And then she sighed.

———

When Madeline appeared at his bedside, Mr. Lord made an effort to smile through his bandages, and to put out a burned and poulticed hand.

I want to tell you something," he began huskily, "but first, have you done anything?"

"Yes; Mr. Hurst, the detective, is already hard at work upon the case."

Mr. Lord was silent for some moments, then he asked:

"Have you seen him?"

Madeline started. "Seen Mr. Hurst, do you mean? Mr. Drexel has kindly acted for me; it has been made very easy for me between them."

"What do you think of him?" persisted the sick man, seeming not to have noticed her evasion.

"I think he will solve our mystery, if the solution is possible. Mr. Lord, I wish you would let me call Mr. Drexel. He is in the library. He will tell you what has been done so much better than I can. And he communicates direct with Mr. Hurst. Of course it wouldn't do for a detective to be seen coming here. Mr. Hurst

thinks it likely that your house is being watched constantly.

"Yes, I dare say." Mr. Lord seemed little affected by this supposition. "Call Drexel, then."

When the two were seated beside his bed and very near it, he said, with his eyes on the latest comer:

"The doctor won't let me talk more than I can help. Drexel, you must know that I appreciate your interest in myself and my adventures. I suppose you have been told—"

"I have told him about those letters, if you mean that," broke in Madeline. "I thought it was necessary."

Drexel, in quick, graphic sentences, told of the discoveries concerning the florist's messenger and the difference in the testimony of the footman, Harvey, and the woman, Mrs. Marvin.

"Upon visiting the florist," Drexel said, "it happens unfortunately that, on the day in question, they were more than usually crowded with orders for dinner flowers, and in the hurry of getting out belated ones, things got somewhat tangled. As a result, no one remembers what particular messenger was sent here, and what seems a trifle strange, none of the boys themselves, when called up and questioned, will acknowledge being the messenger."

"And what has our detective done about all this?" demanded Mr. Lord.

"He has opened an investigation in his own way among the florist's delivery boys. He has set a watch upon both Mrs. Marvin and Harvey. Other men are employed in looking up the past of each of these two. In fact, all your servants, who by the way seem honest and respectable above the average, are under surveillance."

"Now, Miss Payne," said Mr. Lord, "please unlock

the safe there beside the fire-place; there's a long, narrow rosewood box there, bring that."

All were silent while Madeline unlocked the safe and brought the rosewood box to the bedside. "Open it, Drexel."

Drexel took the box from Madeline's hand, and pressed upon the light spring that fastened it.

"Take them out," whispered Mr. Lord. "Look at them, all of you."

Drexel took out first a wrinkled letter, which he put into Madeline's hand, and next, a long, slender, keen-edged dagger.

"That dagger," said Mr. Lord, "I found pinning the letter there to the head of my bed. It was placed there while I lay under it asleep, more than seven months ago. You see, don't you, I have had my three warnings." His eyes met those of Madeline, and in them he plainly read a question and answered it as if it had been spoken. "You wonder why I told you the rest, showed you the others, and kept this from you. It was wrong; I see it now. I thought these later warnings were from some of my factory people. I did not connect the two until now, and I meant to keep this always from every one."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE "DAGGER IN THE WOOD"

And then rapidly, and in as few words as was possible, he told them the story of that night.

"The man was tall and muscular," he said in conclusion. "His voice was a good, firm bass, not harsh nor unpleasant. I think he was not so rough and uncouth of speech as he would have had me believe. He made several slips into better language than he meant to use. They've been watching me all along; there's no doubt of it."

Vaughan and Drexel both arose as if by one impulse.

"This is very important," said the latter, "but you have talked quite enough. Good-bye for the present, Mr. Lord." He nodded toward the doctor and turned to leave the room.

Madeline bent over the couch and murmured in the sick man's ear, "Shall I go?" He nodded an assent, and she bent her head as she passed Dr. Vaughan, and followed Drexel.

"Now," she said, turning upon Drexel as soon as the door had closed behind them, "what is it?"

"It is this: Mr. Lord has been tried, found guilty, condemned."

"Tried! By whom, and for what?"

"Tried by the most powerful secret society on the face of the globe! Condemned because, after being warned, Mr. Lord has chosen to let the warning pass unheeded. Until now I thought it might not be the worst—that Mr.

Lord had incurred the displeasure of some local order, or perhaps a group of his own employes. I even fancied that their missile had done more damage than was intended—that it was not meant to kill. But now—"

"Now—and what now?"

"Now I am able to recognize our enemies, and it is my duty to tell you that they are dangerous and powerful. Heavens! I wish I had not drawn you into this!"

"You draw me into it! Mr. Drexel, you forget. But for you I would be fighting in the dark and with insufficient weapons, while now I have the help of Mr. Hurst, and I know what that is worth."

"Nevertheless you would be safer without it, Miss Payne. I wish you would withdraw from this matter altogether. Leave it to me."

And why? Have you discovered that I can be of no use to you? A clog, perhaps?"

"No; that is folly. It is of your safety I am thinking. Upon the slightest suspicion that you and I are engaged in thwarting their plans, we shall be surrounded with spies. Should it become known that Drexel and Hurst are one, you, as the friend of Drexel, are in danger. They would treat you ruthlessly. Nothing that they can destroy or overthrow will be permitted to stand in their way. Of course Mr. Lord must not know this yet. And he need not know that you are acting with me. Leave it to me and you will be safe enough."

Madeline drew herself up grandly erect and haughty.

"Mr. Drexel, if you were to withdraw—and if there is any such thing, you are the one to withdraw—I would still hold to my purpose. But it seems incredible. We are not in Russia."

"No, we are not in Russia. We are in a land so broad and free that it welcomes to its shores every assassin, political offender, and escaped convict. We are in Amer-

ica, bestowing the gift of free speech and the liberty of the press upon men so dangerous that even Russia, with all her police, her jails, her spies, and her Siberia, will not, dare not, keep them at large within her border. These are the men who, within a few years, have turned our before harmless leagues and unions into festering sores; who are making socialism, once little more than another name for republicanism, a curse and a huge menace to the peace and welfare of our nation. But, pardon me, Miss Payne; I am haranguing you. I confess that I have been startled. I wish you were out of this house."

"Where would you advise me to go, Mr. Drexel?"

He caught the gleam of her eye and the ring of sarcasm in her voice. But he was quite beyond sarcasm, outside of the conventional pale.

"If I had dreamed that Mr. Lord's enemies were what they are, I would never have permitted you to take one step with me. I would have prevented you from having any part in or knowledge of these things, at any cost."

"Really? You must consider yourself all-powerful! Even for Mr. Hurst that might have been difficult."

"Mr. Hurst is accustomed to difficulties," he said grimly. "But we are wasting words."

"Precisely my opinion. I can understand now why Mr. Lord trusted me with such an important secret. At first, I confess it seemed to me a little strange. It is this dagger and nocturnal visit that has been upon his mind, rather than the anonymous letters."

"I believe you are right."

"If he made the fact of this visit known, it might weaken this new society, might intimidate some. So he intended to keep this visit a secret altogether. I think, too, that it may have a stronger impression upon him than he would be willing to admit."

"Quite natural, that."

"Now, when that first anonymous letter came, he began to see a probability of danger. Note the character of the man; he is facing the danger doggedly—has been from the first. But by and by the thought comes to him, 'If they should kill me in some secret way and I have held my tongue to the last, the rascals will go free,' and that thought would decide him."

"Upon my word, I believe you are right in every particular," Drexel broke in.

"Thanks. Then he casts about for a confidante. Mrs. Ralston won't do; she has nerves. There remains myself. It was Hobson's choice, you see. But even so, he did choose me and I accepted his confidence, and now I am more than ever eager to take an active part. Don't talk to me about danger. Since the danger has increased, let my work increase. I withdraw all restrictions. Consider me a female detective, thirsting for honor and glory in my profession. Don't make me merely a repository of secrets, a go-between. Let me help; let me work!"

And so this pair, two arrayed against an unknown quantity, ratified anew their compact, and then and there began to arrange their plans for the defense of the helpless man above-stairs.

"One question," said Madeline, as he was about to go; "I think everything else is clear to me. Are you quite certain that dagger and accompaniments may not have been placed there by some power other than that you believe to be so dangerous. May it not—"

"I understand," he broke in; "but don't indulge in a hope of that sort. It is the dagger used by the most dangerous order in the universe. It is almost a death-warrant. I have reason to know that dagger."

CHAPTER XXIV

A CRYPTOGRAM

"My Dear Vaughan: Does the sign of these hieroglyphics take you back a few years when we undertook to unravel the secret cipher invented and used by 'Slippery Joe Dilkes' and his pals—that quartette of evil-doers, now happily extinct? When you and I mastered the secret of the cipher, we wondered, jestingly, if we should ever have need to communicate with each other by means of it. Now, here am I obliged, yes obliged, to address to you, in this self-same cipher, words that I dare not commit to plain English upon paper. If this is placed in your hands by the bravest, best, and most wonderful woman in the world, you will read it and then you will destroy it—cipher as it is.

"When I went abroad a few years ago, you wondered, with many other good friends, at my long sojourn in foreign lands. How could you know, from such random letters as I saw fit to send to my friends in those days, that I had found, or thought I had, an 'object,' absorbing, fascinating. 'Grand and noble', I called it then, and believed myself allied to the greatest cause that man ever lived or died for, and associated with men whose names would sooner or later be written 'high up on the roll of honor and fame.'

"Beginning in France and ending in Italy, I became a convert to a new plan of evangelization—not all in a moment. I had my American ideas and some strongly rooted prejudices against organized secret societies, ex-

cept such as have their foundations in the moral or social welfare of the associated—*i. e.*, of our clubs and lodges—'milk and water,' I soon learned to call them.

"Little by little I began to realize how all Europe is honey-combed with secret societies; how these, begun separately, had gradually grown toward each other, joined hands, and united issues, until they were growing a power beyond belief. The first step is simple, practical, with nothing to shock the prejudices, everything to arouse the sympathies of chivalric natures. The onward march is fascinating. For more than two years I was held, bound by the spell.

"I will tell you how the change was wrought. I had gone on from grade to grade, and there are many, and had been introduced to some choice spirits who dwell near the innermost shrine. I was devoured with curiosity, eager to rise, eager to learn. I was picked out to do a certain work, and in doing it I had to see too much, to learn something of how this great complicated machine was kept oiled and perfectly running. I cannot think of that time without a shudder. I had gone so far, there was no going back. I had learned so much that, not for the sake of the society, but for my own sake, for the sake of humanity, I must know more. I did learn more. I reached admittance into circles not far below the highest. At first, I confess, I hardly thought beyond the determination to know the full power for good and evil that rested in that inner circle. In the early days of my enthusiasm, I had made one or two converts. For these I felt responsible. I felt as if I could never let them out of my sight, and now for such information as she can give, I refer you to Miss Payne. She knows that for some time I have been occupied in studying the movements of that ever-increasing body of men, revolutionists all, who call themselves socialists, anarchists,

leaguers—a variety of names, all meaning the same in kind, with an admitted difference in degree. This difference will be of little importance when the great outbreak comes, if it is permitted to come. And here let me tell you what I know of these people.

"First: They are far stronger, immeasurably, than is generally supposed, and they are growing stronger daily. Their ranks are swelled considerably by our disaffected home laborers, and more disaffected home idlers, and immensely by the constant influx of foreign fire-eaters, who have acted their great specialty once too often at home. Sooner or later these miscreants will make their influence and their power felt, unless we are prompt to act.

"Second: There has been for some time a movement on foot to draw together the various societies of laborers, mechanics, etc., to bind them by a common interest, so that all may act in concert. This movement is a success, as our government may learn to its cost, if the amalgamating process is allowed to continue too long.

"Third: The majority of these people are, many of them, well-meaning but misled, and, in most cases, uninformed; they are not aware that they form what is known to those above them as the outer circle; this outer circle is little informed as to the objects and methods of their leaders. The chief officers of this outer circle are, for the most part, members, not officers, of the second circle. And above them are other grades.

"Fourth: The brains, the hands that move the machinery, are not known to the lower circles, but here in New York, now, to-day, are agents and agencies sent from Europe; not beggarly, mouthing orators lodging in tenements, but men of brains, experience, ability, revolutionists, high-salaried, caring indeed nothing for money, drawing as they do upon a purse filled by a

dozen nations. These upper circles are each composed, for the most part, of four or five members. The upper grades decide what blows shall be struck, and where, and when, and how. They are laying out an organized campaign against capital. They condemn factories, bring about strikes. They have their black-lists. Now, as to Mr. Lord's danger from this society. I did not tell Madeline quite the whole truth concerning that dagger. It was not a threat nor a warning. It was a death-warrant. He is a doomed man. I have known many instances, since I entered the upper circles, where that death-warrant was issued in Europe—it is new here in America—and I never knew one to fail or be withdrawn. It is my present mission to save him if possible; not him alone, but others. To do this there is but one way: To wipe out entirely this select circle on this side of the waters, for without the head the hands are not to be feared. It is my purpose to drive out of the country, or out of the world, a quartette, more or less, of men who sit behind the scenes and plot destruction, using as tools the needs of some, the greed of others—all the worst and strongest attributes of men; but not depending upon these alone, when a man like Elias Lord has been condemned.

"Old friend, I go upon a dangerous mission. I have set my home in order. But I hope to come back—not, however, until I have undone the wrong done myself and my country in an hour of rash, ill-directed enthusiasm. When you have read these pages and heard what Miss Payne may then have to tell, it will remain for you to act—at your own discretion. I say no more."

CHAPTER XXV

MISSING

When Roger Drexel took the foregoing letter to Madeline and put it into her hands, he said:

"It is for Dr. Vaughan, and you will please take charge of it. It is written in a cipher which is known to him, for it contains information that I would not ask you to keep in your possession in ordinary writing. As it is, you are safe enough. It may be that I shall have to go away at any moment, to be abroad for some time; but if all goes well, I shall let you hear from me, by some means, at stated intervals. Should you ever fail to hear from me for a month, you may give this letter to Dr. Vaughan and tell him everything. But I trust and expect that you will hear from me frequently. Now let me tell you what I may of my plans."

He was preparing for a grave and difficult undertaking, and he was plunging into his maze with a clue so slight, upon evidence and suggestions so complicated and contradictory, that he felt, and was, more than justified in his precautionary measures.

It was on the morning of the third day after the explosion in Mr. Lord's reception-hall, that he put the letter into Miss Payne's hands. He had called at an early hour, and by appointment. A quarter of an hour later he entered the show-room of a fashionable florist, made his way to the rear through aisles of bloom and

fragrance, and was welcomed by the sole occupant of a tiny office which overlooked everything from an elevation three steps above the floor.

"Ah, Mr. Hurst, good morning, sir," closing a ledger hastily and drawing forward a chair. The man was rapid and direct. While Drexel was seating himself, he asked quickly:

"Anything new, sir?"

"No. How is it with you?"

"I think I have found your boy. He reddened when I spoke of the business, and stammered and could remember very little about that particular day. Would you like to see him?"

"Yes."

The florist touched a silvered knob at the side of his desk. In a moment a head appeared at the office door.

"Send the boy Frank Price to me." The head bobbed and vanished.

"Frank Price is not here, sir."

"Not here?"

"No, sir. He has not been here this morning."

"Has he sent any word?"

"No, sir; the boys were talking about him when I went to call him. They"—he looked first at his master and then at the stranger and hesitated.

"Well, what is it?" asked the florist; "come in Mike, and close that door. Never mind this gentleman. What were you about to say?"

Mike, a freckled-faced, half-grown boy, came sliding in and pulled the door shut behind him.

"Excuse me, sir," he began hastily, "but you was askin' the boys who took the flowers to—to that place—"

"Yes, I know; go on, Mike."

"Well, sir, I heard them talkin' among themselves, and it seems that Billy Jarvis was almost sure it was

Frank that took the flowers, and afterward he told him so. Frank wouldn't say anything right out, but kind of argued. They were fussin' about it after they got out last night, and they've been talkin' it over again this mornin'."

"You may go, Mike."

When the door closed behind Mike, Drexel put down his paper. "Have you anything to suggest?" asked the florist.

"Yes; will you question this boy Jarvis and find out what is known about the affair, about this Frank and where he lives?"

Billy Jarvis was a tall, slim boy with a wide-awake air and a "knowing" face. He presented himself without hesitation or awkwardness, cap in hand, and stood expectantly before his employer, smiling and serene.

The florist was a man of direct methods. His first words sent the smile from Billy's face.

"Boy, do you know that I've half a mind to discharge you?"

"I, sir?" Billy's mouth opened and closed as if speech had forsaken him.

"Yes; when I asked you yesterday morning a second time if you knew anything about the basket of roses and lilies, what did you tell me?"

"Nothing, sir." Billy began to pull himself together, but at the mention of the basket he flushed and paled again through his freckles.

"Nothing?"

"Oh—I may have said that I didn't take the basket and didn't know who did."

"Didn't know? Now, young man, don't waste any more words. Out with it. Why did you accuse Frank Price, or hint that it was he who took that basket?"

"I—I don't like to tell on the other boys, sir."

"BOY, DO YOU KNOW, I HAVE HALF A MIND TO DISCHARGE YOU?"
—Moina, p. 150.

"Oh, you don't like to be a tale-bearer. That's well. But circumstances alter cases. It will be to Frank's interest that we—that I know the truth. Did Frank deliver that basket of roses and lilies?"

"I—I am not sure, sir. I really am not."

"Think. It was a center-piece, a large one, made for a dinner table. Come now." The tone of the florist had grown milder. It was almost coaxing. The boy seemed to renew his courage. He looked up, straightened his shoulders, and came a step nearer his employer.

"I'll tell you just how it was, sir. I was sent out with some bouquets for the theater, they said. I overtook Frank carrying a basket. I think it was the lilies and roses. I thought, as I came up, that he was talking with some one, but there was such a crowd I could not be sure. Anyhow, by the time I came up with him he was alone, and we went on together for two blocks. Then I turned and we went opposite ways almost."

"Do you remember the time?"

"No, sir; but it was late, for when I got back all the others were gone except Frank, and he came running in. He seemed in a great hurry, and provoked too. I remember what he said."

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'There—one is always late when one don't want to be.'"

"Did you go away together?"

"I tried to keep up with him for a little way, but he hurried so. We used often to walk to Merriell street together. I live on Merriell street, and used to leave him there. But that night, before we had gone half a block, as I was puffing along to keep up with him, he said, 'You needn't hurry because I do.' 'What makes you in such a hurry?' says I. 'I'm hungry,' he says, 'and I'm going to have an extra big supper. I've got

to go on.' With that he begins to run, and I didn't try to keep up with him any more. I noticed one thing, though."

"What was that?"

"He turned the very next corner, and I thought that was queer, for, if he was so hungry, that was not going home. I suppose he went somewhere else to supper."

"Probably," smiled the florist, who was growing interested in the investigation. "Do you know where Frank lives?"

"Yes, sir. At least I know it's on Krupp street, at a corner, in a big tenement."

"Now, tell me why you didn't tell me this when I made my first inquiry?"

"Because I thought, of course, Frank would speak right up, and when he didn't—I hated to be mean, sir, and he looked at me as much as to say 'Don't tell.'

The gentleman in the corner laid down his newspaper and made a movement as if to rise.

"Mr. Hurst, I'm quite at your service," cried the florist. "I did not expect to be so long over this little matter. Billy, you may go. And I think it would be well, as you seem a friend of his, to drop in and see if Frank may not be sick."

"I want some one from your establishment to go to the home of this boy, Frank Price—not our friend Billy, who might gossip perhaps," said Drexel, when the boy was gone.

"I think Mike would do. He is very faithful and not too talkative. Besides he does not know that I am making any special inquiry. What instructions shall I give him?"

"Merely to look up the boy and report to you."

It was nearing noon when Drexel left the florist's and

at half past two he received the following note from the florist:

"Mike has just returned. He found the mother of Frank Price on the top floor of the big tenement on the southeast corner of Krupp and Martin streets. She was almost distracted over the absence of Frank, who has not been home, she says, since yesterday morning."

"A prompt man, a most upright man," commented Drexel upon reading this letter. "But, lest he should fail to find Master Frank Price, I too will begin an investigation."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DETECTIVE CAMERA

At three o'clock, half an hour after reading the florist's letter, Drexel presented himself before his friend, the chief of police.

"Captain, will you lend me another man?" he asked. "A boy has been missing from his home since yesterday, or is said to be missing. His mother is a poor sewing-woman. I have reason to think there's a crook somewhere. It may even turn out that the boy is in hiding, and that the woman knows it. I want a man shrewd enough to find out to a reasonable certainty if the boy is really missing or not."

The captain touched a bell and gave an order.

"Bates is here," he said, "and he is the man you want."

Mr. Bates filled the measure of Drexel's requirements, perfectly. He was good-natured, elderly, fatherly in appearance. It did not take Drexel long to determine that he was also shrewd. They went to the vicinity of the boy's home.

"What did you learn about the boy?" asked Drexel, after Bates had visited the house.

"Very little. Frank has always had to work too hard to make acquaintances. His mother knows of no one who could have any reason for enticing him away from home."

"Did you sound her about the flowers?"

"Yes, thoroughly. I am sure she has never heard those flowers mentioned. She gave me this." He put a small

picture into Drexel's hand. It was a cheap tin-type, showing a bright-faced boy in an awkward attitude and evidently dressed in his "Sunday best." "She says it's a good likeness and was taken about four months ago. I had to pledge myself to return it."

Drexel studied it thoughtfully.

"It's not a bad face," he said; "not a tricky face. This will help us. Now, let's consider our next step. I'm going to take you a little farther into this business. You have yet some day-light left, and I am going to put these horses and my driver at your disposal. Next, try the police stations and the hospitals. Be sure that you visit them all, if necessary."

Drexel hastened to one of the many rooms he rented in the city. There he found Norton, the detective, awaiting him.

"There is not much to tell," began Little Norton, while Drexel lighted his cigar. "I'm established under the same roof with your foreign princesses, and even have a room on the same floor. A young man, good-looking, and a foreigner I think, came this afternoon, early, and staid just an hour and ten minutes. His name is Rene Savareis."

"Savareis. Rene Savareis!" repeated Drexel thoughtfully. "It seems to me I have heard that name. Rene Savareis!"

"When I got back," went on Little Norton, "I met with better luck. As I was passing the ladies' entrance, a hall-servant was talking to a little man, uglier than I am, and not much bigger. He was asking for the Princess Orloff. He had a message that he was ordered to deliver at the lady's own door, and there was a brief argument about it, loud enough for me to hear, after I had turned the angle of the hall. It ended in the fellow's being escorted to the Princess' door by the servant."

"Yes; go on."

"When I heard what was to be done, I hurried on, stopped boldly a few paces from the ladies' ante-room, and, with my back turned toward it, waited. When I heard them close behind, I turned, began to speak, stopped, and said, as if annoyed at my mistake: 'Oh, it's you; I mistook you for some one I am waiting for.' I had, of course, tipped all the hall-servants, with an eye to possibilities of this sort, and my servant was satisfied. This messenger did not enter the rooms of madame the princess, but gave his letter to a maid-servant and waited outside. I changed my position, took a step or two nearer, pulled a little string, and—click! he was taken, full length."

He took from a breast pocket a small object wrapped in tissue paper, talking the while.

"It was my little button camera did the business, and the print is a good one, though none too big." He had unrolled the tissue paper, and now held out a circle of sensitive paper, little more than an inch and a half in size. "I had to take him endwise," he added, as Drexel took the paper.

"But it's him? Why, what?"

Drexel had looked at the small unfinished proof, looked closer, and then uttered a sharp exclamation.

Little Norton's eyes followed him curiously as he got up and went to the window to take a closer view.

"Ah!" he said. "You have done well, Norton. It's a good day's work. I know him."

CHAPTER XXVII

SEEKING A CLUE

"Eh! You know him?"

"Well, we're acquaintances. I have seen him; the fellow 's a spy, and I begin to think one who may prove troublesome. Oh, I remember!" He stopped short and began to walk about the room. He had suddenly remembered that on each of the three occasions when this spy had crossed his path, this stranger, Savareis, had also appeared.

"Now, Norton, on two occasions," resumed Drexel, "there has been, on the one hand, Savareis and myself; on the other, this spy. Was the fellow watching Savareis or me?"

"It couldn't have been you."

No," but it may have been you."

"Great Scott!"

"Norton, these men that we're fighting are not children—they're veterans, long-armed, and cunning. If you allow yourself to forget this, if you are off your guard for a moment, you'll be detected, and then good-bye to your usefulness on this case. It would not be matter for surprise if, while you were operating with your precious little button camera, the fellow was doing the same good turn for you."

"No, he wasn't," cried Norton. "From the moment when he handed his letter to the servant, he stood with both hands clasped on that crooked stick, just as you see him in the picture."

"Well, Norton, if the man appears again, you must manage to find out his lair. Don't lose sight of him until you do."

"Hush!" said Norton; "there's somebody outside."

A quick knock was heard. Drexel opened the door promptly, a little to Norton's surprise. It was Officer Bates who entered.

"I've found him," said Bates. "When you left me, I went to the nearest station. There I learned that a boy answering to our description was crossing the street yesterday and got hit by something, wagon-tongue or wheel. His head was all bloody, and he had got a broken leg; he is now in the hospital."

After a few more questions, Drexel dismissed Bates, after bidding him report to him on the following morning for a possible commission. When Bates was gone, he turned to Little Norton. "This is the boy who delivered the flowers at Mr. Lord's door on the evening of the reception," he said. And Drexel briefly recounted the story of his experience in the pursuit of the boy, Frank Price.

Norton listened with his usual stolidity. "If I am not mistaken," he said, "you want to use me in this business."

"I want you to forego your dinner at the Occidental, and go at once to your old rooms and make yourself over. You are too well-dressed; a new face, too, will be safest. Then go to the florist's place of business. Tell him of this, and ask him to go at once to Krupp Street, get Mrs. Price and take her straight to the hospital. She must identify the boy. I want you to go with them and keep your eyes open. At the hospital, find out the truth about the boy's condition, above all, how soon one may talk with him. Ask Mr. Medlicott to assume for me all responsibility as to the boy's care;

he must have the best. And his mother must not be permitted to take him from the hospital without my knowledge." Little Norton was looking at him intensely.

"Well, what is it?" queried Drexel.

"You have an idea about this boy," he said slowly. "I would like to ask what it is."

"Two of Mr. Lord's servants declare that they saw this boy, but they describe him differently. A woman who saw him pass the basement window tells of a small boy dressed in dark clothes and wearing a cap. Instead of going to the side entrance this boy passes on, and two minutes later, the street door opens to admit a boy who wears, according to the footman, a light jacket and a hat. He delivers the flowers that were seen by the woman. She is positive on that point, and he deposits them, with his own hands, upon the table, as I have before told you."

"I'll wager," said Little Norton", that you have a theory. What is it?"

"Well, Norton, if you're not direct, you're nothing. But I don't mind telling you. It's hardly probable that a boy, upon the public street, and at the very door of a merchant's house, should stop to change his toilet. It is possible that there were two boys, and that for some reason, the flowers changed hands. In that case, they were not delivered by Frank Price, for he wore dark clothes and a cap."

"Oh—oh!"

"Now, these facts, taken together with the boy's evasions when questioned, may mean that he was beguiled into trusting the flowers to another, who, in this case, was of course somebody's agent. The Prices are very poor, and a bribe may have been offered him."

"Now that I understand matters," said Little Norton,

"I'm off. In the meantime how about business at the Occidental?"

"That must wait for the present. We have an inkling already, and I think may be able to trace our spy through Savareis. If things grow complicated, I shall put some one else in your place at the hotel and give you livelier work."

"That suits me," said the little man; "and now for the florist."

When he was at last alone, Drexel penned the following note to Madeline Payne:

"My Friend: Under present circumstances, it seems best that I should not call at your home, but I wish to see you. I shall ride in the park to-morrow morning from 10:30 to 12 o'clock. If you should be there also at that time, it would make me your most happy and grateful servant, R. Drexel."

"There!" he said. "If that falls into wrong hands, it will be taken for a love letter. She will be quick enough to understand."

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NEW PURSUIT

The crowd at Court and Laffin streets was less dense in the evening; rather, the number of vehicles was somewhat lessened, while the foot passengers surged on in shoals. These corners were the points from which several theaters, cafes, and other resorts quite as popular if less proper, were reached with ease, and street-cars and omnibuses discharged here their evening freight of pleasure-seekers. As a consequence, street-stands were numerous in this locality, and newsboys and boot-blacks conspicuous.

Early in the evening, a dignified personage might have been seen about these four corners, moving with the throng, now here, now there, seeming quite at his ease and in no haste.

He was tall and rather stout, with blonde hair and whiskers—wearing a high silk hat and gold-rimmed spectacles, and carrying a heavy cane in his gloved hands. After some time spent in seemingly aimless loitering, this man paused and stood upon the northeast corner of the intersecting streets. For some moments he watched the maneuver of a talkative little boot-black, who had stationed himself at the foot of a flight of steps leading up to a lofty entrance in the angle of the great corner building. This lad had been very busy for more than an hour, polishing the boots of the pleasure-goers. He seemed to know many of his patrons and to

be a most popular artist in his line. While at work upon one pair of feet, he had for the most part, two or three customers in waiting.

For the first moment in many, he looked about him and saw no pair of feet waiting the application of his brushes. "Business played out for to-night," he muttered, and then he noticed the tall man with the spectacles, who had gradually drawn nearer as the last patron moved briskly away. "Want yer boots blacked, sir?"

"Yes, my boy," said the stranger in a genial tone. "I have been waiting for my turn for some time. These are busy corners, I should judge from what I saw to-night," he said, carelessly.

"Busy! Yes, you just ought to come along here in the day-time. I tell ye it keeps the perlice busy."

"Is it worse than at night?"

"You bet it's worse. There's so much more teamin' then; drays, an' wagons an' things."

"Oh, yes indeed. Do you ever have an accident in these crowds?"

"Accidents? My, yes! There's smash-ups most every day. Folks gits knocked down tryin' to dodge 'crost. An' last week a man just rushed out there and flung himself down right in front of the cable cars, tryin' ter git run over. The perlice yanked him off the track in time, though."

"My, my! It must be an unsafe place for children—for boys out alone. Boys are apt to be careless sometimes."

"That's so. Why, only yesterday a boy got knocked down out there, right under the feet of some big horses, and he was just about tramped to death. I seen the hull thing."

"Really, now. That must have frightened you."

"Not me; I'm used to it. It scairt the other boy though. My, but how he lit out!"

"Were there two boys?"

"Yes, two of 'em started acrost together."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, 'taint much. I didn't happen to be busy, and I noticed the two boys come up and stand on the pavement right over there behind you. Don't s'pose I'd 'a' noticed 'em, if it hadn't been for a old sardine of a Jew a-standin' clost to 'em. I hate a Jew. An old Jew did me a mean turn once, an' the hull lot of 'em's mean, anyhow. This one looked meaner than most."

"Why, how did he look?"

"I guess you ain't seen many of 'em," said the boy, glancing up and ceasing from his labors. "He was a little, dried-up codger, with an old butternut coat on, and he had a big knotty walkin'-stick in his hand. I noticed him lookin' at the two boys, an' I seen him give the little feller a real mean, ugly look, 'afore the boy had jostled him or somethin'."

"Did he speak to the boys?"

"No, not that I seen. He was just a scowlin' at the little un when I happened to see, an' that made me take more notice of them boys than I would generally. I thought the little chap seemed kind o' scairt like; he kept hurryin' the other one along."

"Was it the little one that was hurt?"

"No, it was the big one, and he wan't very big."

"As big as you, perhaps?"

"Well, mebbe a little bigger. As I was sayin', they all started to run acrost together, an' they went into the crowd Injun file."

"Did you see which went first?"

"Yes, 'twas the little feller. An' the Jew with the big stick came last. They was all mixed up among the

wagons an' horses fer a minnit, an' then I seen the boy go down under the horses' feet, an' then the cops rushed in, an' just then the little feller streaked it past me, an' off the same way he came. My! but his face was white an' he just legged it."

"What became of the Jew?"

"Oh, I didn't see no more of him. He got across safe enough, you bet, and went right along. 'Twant nothin' to him how many boys got killed right under his nose; he didn't stop to look after the boy, or I'd a seen him."

"And the boy that was hurt; what became of him?"

"Took him to the hospital."

"It seems to me," said the stranger slowly, "that I read about that boy in the newspapers. But, my lad, the paper said that the injured boy was alone; that nobody could identify him."

The boy recoiled a step, and a look of anger flashed into his face. "Look here," he said, "what're ye givin' me, anyhow?"

"Softly, boy, softly. I only thought it was strange that nobody knew the boy. Didn't you tell the police what you saw?"

"Well, I jest didn't. What for would I? 'Twant my business. D'ye s'pose I wanted ter be jerked off ter the perlice station for a witness, an' like as not shet up over night, an' leave my stand an' lose my trade? Not much! I've got to take care of number one, I have. Who'd pay me or thank me? No sir. What's the perlice fer, I'd like ter know? I ain't a doin' their work. Darn it, anyhow, I wish I'd a kep' my blamed .mouth shet."

"You need not be uneasy about me, boy. I'm your friend, and I shall not abuse your confidence. But," he added, musingly, "I feel interested. I'd—give—five dollars—to see that boy—who ran away."

"Would ye?" cried the boot-black. "Wal, I wish I could jist run acrost him then, that's all."

"Would you know him again?"

"Know him? In course I'd know him."

"And would you know the Jew?"

"You bet."

"Even if he had changed his butternut coat for another?"

"I'd know him with his ugly mug, anyhow."

The stranger seemed to meditate. He was jingling some loose coin in his hand. He had not as yet paid the boot-black.

"What is your name, my lad?" he asked, presently.

"Johnny Deegan."

"Where do you live?"

"Oh, most anywhere. Sometimes with some of the other boys, sometimes at the Home. I ain't very perticler about lodgin's."

"And how much do you earn a day, Johnny? How much at the most?"

"Well, since I've been at this stan' I've done pretty well; most days have earned a dime or two." The boy was putting away his brushes. It was evident that he did not mean to be communicative about his earnings.

The stranger smiles.

"Listen, Johnny," he said. "I see you want to be off. Now, I'm going to make you an offer." Johnny slung his box across his shoulder and stood waiting. "I'm interested in your story about these boys. Do you suppose if you gave all your time to it you could find the boy that ran away? Wait, let me finish. Of course, you would have to look for him on the street, in the places where such boys are likely to be. You ought to know where to search for such a boy." Johnny grinned. "Was the boy well-dressed?"

"Umph! 'Bout as well as me." Johnny certainly could not be accused of being well-dressed. "T'other one, that got hurt, was dressed better."

"Yes; and if you were looking for the boy, of course you could keep your eyes open for the Jew. You are sure he was a Jew?"

"He looked like one. I would go amongst the Jews to hunt him."

"Well, my boy, suppose I offer to get you a room where you could sleep, and pay for your meals and get you a better suit of clothes, how much a day will you take to leave your corner here, and make it your business to look for these two?"

"My eye!" exclaimed Johnny, with a knowing wink. "So that's your little game, is it?"

"I'll manage everything," went on the stranger, calmly. "You'll get your money regularly, every night if you like, and the day that you find either of them, and can tell me where they live, I will give you twenty-five dollars, and be your friend afterward. If you don't want to black boots any more, I'll see that you have work and good pay. By the way, Johnny, are you hungry?"

"Wal, there ain't many times when I couldn't eat more'n I get," admitted the boy.

"Don't you know a snug little place where we can go and get anything you want to eat, and talk this matter over? I'll pay, of course. And here, take this."

At sight of the piece of money that was slipped into his hand, hesitation vanished. Johnny pocketed the coin and said:

"I know a bully place about two blocks from here."

"Come, then."

At eleven o'clock that night, Roger Drexel might have been seen in the room where he had lately received

Officer Bates and Little Norton. The latter was present, now, and talking with unusual animation. Roger was standing beside a small table, upon which lay a tall silk hat, and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, and was listening with evident interest, taking off, meanwhile, a blonde wig and a fine set of yellow whiskers.

The next morning, and for many mornings after, the freckled face and pug nose of Johnny Deegan was missing from the northeast corner of Court and Laffiin streets.

CHAPTER XXIX

MADELINE PAYNE THE DETECTIVE

Promptly at the hour named in his note to Madeline, Roger Drexel entered Central Park at the scholars' gate, knowing that she would be likely to arrive at this entrance, coming as she must, from below, for the house of Mr. Lord was upon Fifth Avenue, and not too far from the Park. He was splendidly mounted, and looked as handsome and care-free as any idler of the morning. He lingered a little near the entrance, then turned into one of the bridle-paths, taking care to choose a course that would bring him back soon to Fifty-ninth street, and the scholars' gate. He had not long to wait. Madeline, too, was prompt, and, as he rode to meet her, and wheeled his horse beside her own, after an exchange of morning greetings, no one could have guessed, seeing them canter blithely away, that theirs was not a rendezvous of pleasure.

"Tell me your news, please," said Drexel.

"Last night we held a council of war; first Dr. Vaughan and I alone, then with Mr. Lord. Of course, you don't want the details, for there was an argument as long as the doctor would permit. We have carried our point, or your point. It was your suggestion. Mr. Lord has consented to shut up his house and go to the country as soon as it is prudent to remove him."

Drexel's face showed his surprise and gratification.

"Tell me," he said finally, "something more about your voyage across the Atlantic in company with Mr.

La Croix and his party. How many did that party number?"

"There was no party. Only Mr. La Croix and his daughter."

"You forget the Englishman."

"No; the Englishman was presented to Mr. and Miss La Croix, as he was to Mrs. Ralston and myself, by the captain."

"And what other acquaintances did you make, you and the La Croix? I have a reason for asking, believe me."

"I do not doubt," she said gravely, 'and I begin to comprehend. Then there was the young man I told you of, the artist; he called himself such. He came on board alone, and soon became friendly with the Englishman."

"One moment. Was he a handsome, slender, dark-eyed youth?"

"Yes," wonderingly.

"And was he called Savareis? Rene Savareis?"

"True."

"Now, do you not consider it odd that these three strangers should grow into friendly relations so rapidly? That, soon after their arrival, they were all together at a meeting of anarchists—Mr. La Croix the speaker of the evening, introduced by this Crashaw, as one he had long known, and this handsome artist, Savareis, seated in the audience, acting as escort to Miss Moina La Croix? Do you not begin to understand me? Do you think now that the spy who followed Miss La Croix from your house was merely the tool of a jealous man?" She turned in her saddle, and for a moment they regarded each other silently.

"I see—many things," she said at last, "and while I cannot yet abandon my faith in Moina La Croix, I understand fully that you were right and I was wrong.

She must be proven guilty—or vindicated. I still believe in her. But I will do as you wish. I will see her to-morrow, or to-day if you desire it, and I will adopt any line of conduct you may advise."

"You must, of course, leave Mr. Lord's house soon."

"Yes."

"Will you procure a companion, and take up your residence, for a time, at the Occidental?"

"Will you tell me for what?"

"Oh, I am taking you at your word. I want a detective there; someone who can report to me the doings of one Princess Sacha Orloff, a fair Russian—who can, perhaps, make her acquaintance."

"What and who is this Princess Orloff?"

"She is a genuine princess and a very beautiful woman. I believe her to be a spy."

"Of the Russian government?"

"That I cannot say. She may, on the other hand, be a nihilist."

"I care nothing for your fair Russian," said Madeline. "But I would like to believe that Moina La Croix is—what she seems."

"If you will write again to Miss La Croix, telling her that Mrs. Ralston is still ill, that you are about to make a change, not only on her account, but because Mr. Lord has decided to be absent from the city for some time, and that for this reason you will hardly be able to see her for a few days, it will, I think, serve our purpose better than a visit. You might add that as soon as you have settled yourself in new quarters, you will inform her. I don't want you to lose sight of her, or to abandon your friendly footing at her house."

"Mr. Drexel, have you not reasons for suspecting Mr. La Croix, other than the fact of his being a socialist, and having addressed a meeting of these people?"

"Miss Payne," he said, gravely and slowly, "I hope the time will come when I can tell you my own story, for all my knowledge of these people and their doings is founded upon that—upon personal experience. I have told you something, but not all, and this is not the time to talk of myself. Besides, I am not free now to reveal much that I know."

"Pardon me," she began. "Will you pardon me if I ask your further indulgence? You are entitled to my fullest confidence, and in time I shall beg of you to bear all that I have to tell. This much I can say now: I have known for a long time that efforts were being made to draw the different leagues and brotherhoods of our great cities into a union; to band them together, and then to join them to the great body, with one head, that is spread all over Europe. I have known, too, that those high in authority then intended to soon set up their standard here; to send here numbers of that inner circle which dominates all the others, unknown, in many instances, to the men so dominated; knowing this, I have been watching for the coming of these men. Shortly after the arrival of the La Croix in this country, I learned from high authority that the men from whom so much was expected and required were now in New York. The fact of their appearing publicly at a socialists' meeting puzzled me a little at first, for these leaders usually operate secretly, and are hardly ever known to the rank and file. However, I suppose they thought that a new departure was advisable in this instance. I have observed, in the meantime, that they have been careful not to repeat the experiment of appearing together in public. The Englishman has been present, has presided at two or three meetings, never twice in the same place. Savareis has addressed several other gatherings. I think he is the chosen orator of the

embassy, and a fiery, flowery, eloquent fellow he is. But Mr. La Croix has not yet made his second appearance in public. The timely arrival of these men, the manner of it, and their own actions have caused me to fix upon them as the men we must deal with."

"I see, and am convinced. I ask no more. But I hate to think that Moina La Croix' father may have connived at, perhaps ordered, the death, the assassination of one of my friends. He looks honest; he looks noble."

"He is honest; he believes in his cause. But, my friend, if these men are what I consider them, and we could peep into their black-list, we would find, perhaps, the name of more than one whom we know."

"Is there such a list? Can it be! If that is so, we would be justified in committing burglary to obtain it."

"Leave that—the list, and, if necessary, the burglary —to me."

She comes closer to him, a strange excitement glowing in her eyes. "Oh, I begin to feel my nerves grow tense—to scent the battle. I feel like a duelist in the eve of deadly combat."

"And that is what you are; what we both are. From to-day, I go into action, burning my bridges behind me!"

CHAPTER XXX

A BIRD ENSNARED

For the first three days following Mr. Lord's unfortunate dinner, Moina La Croix found little time for thought. Her father was really ill, and before midday, in spite of his objections, she had sent for a physician.

"Doctor," she asked, "is he going to be seriously ill?"

"I do not think he will be very ill," he said. "Tell me; have you seen him like this before?"

"Yes, he could never be brought to admit it, but I believe that every one of these attacks has been brought on by a shock of some sort, or by anxiety, or some form of mental strain."

As she had feared, Rufus Crashaw came that evening, and as he was unwilling to take his dismissal from Margot, Moina went down to the studio where he waited.

"My father is ill," she said, coldly and without seeming to see the proffered hand. "He must be kept perfectly quiet, the doctor says, and can see no one."

"No one but me," smiled Crashaw.

"No one," repeated the girl.

"I shall not disturb him, and he need not talk. I have just a word to say to him." He moved toward the door, but she placed herself before it.

"Mr. Crashaw, you have understood me. No one is admitted to my father's room."

"Miss La Croix, I have a message for him. It will not excite him; but it is important. You must let me see him." He spoke like a man who meant to carry his

"I WANT TO SPEAK ABOUT MY FATHER," SAID MOINA.—Moina, p. 176.

point, and he expected to see his words take effect, but not as they did.

"So my father's comfort, his life, or death perhaps, are of no moment to you?" she said, haughtily.

"Certainly they are, but I have put myself to great inconvenience to come here. I cannot lose my time fruitlessly. I only want one word from your father."

Moina turned and rang the bell; her face was pale, her eyes blazing with the scorn she felt.

"Since you have come at so great inconvenience to yourself, sir," she said, "I will save you another such fruitless errand. When it seems prudent to let my father know that you wish an interview, he shall be told. Until you receive a message assuring you that he is able to receive you, oblige me by not coming again."

"Madam!"

"Be good enough to remember that I am mistress here." And as Margot entered, she turned toward her. "Show Mr. Crashaw out, she said, and left the room without a backward glance.

Early in the evening Rene Savareis came, and Moina hastened to receive him.

"I am glad you are here," she said, after answering his questions about her father. "I wanted to see you; sit down." They were standing face to face in the studio, and she turned, as she spoke, to assure herself that the door was closed.

Rene seated himself and silently waited her next words. He was paler than usual, and graver.

"I want to speak about my father," said Moina, seating herself near him, and speaking in guarded tones. "Tell me: were you with him last evening?"

"No."

"But you know where he was?"

"I suppose so."

"And the nature of the business that called him away unexpectedly?"

Rene was silent.

"Ah," she said sorrowfully, "I thought I might depend upon you. I thought you were my friend."

"And so I am, Miss Moina. What is it? What must I say, or do?"

"I know very well that something has occurred to annoy my father greatly, or to profoundly distress him. I have seen him like this—ill, I mean, as he is now—before, and always mental excitement was the cause. If there is any trouble, anything connected with the mission he has undertaken, that has wrought upon him like this, I beg you to tell me. Oh, I wish you had been with him last night Why were you not?"

"Last night," said Savareis, gloomily, "I was addressing a meeting at his command."

Moina gave a gasp, and rose to her feet, deadly pale.

"Do you mean," she panted, "that he controls—everything?"

Rene nodded.

"If this union is effected, will he—will he order these strikes, boycotts—what do they call them here? Stop; wait: If a man, an enemy to the cause must be disciplined, warned, does the order—the—sanction for the deed come from him?"

"Yes."

She sank weakly into her place again, and for a long time neither spoke. She seemed to have forgotten his presence.

"Thank you," she said, finally, putting out a cold hand, which he took and held for a moment. "Thank you very much. And let us never speak of this again. I see now that I ought not to have forced you to tell me what my father, evidently, meant that I should not know. And

will you excuse me now? I—I must go to him. The new nurse is competent, but strange." She got up again slowly.

"You will come again—come often?"

When he had gone, she did not go at once to her father's bedside. Instead, she cast herself down upon the nearest resting place, and hid her face in her hands.

"Oh," she moaned, "this is worse than I had dared to dream. Far worse! Far worse! It is horrible, horrible, horrible!"

CHAPTER XXXI

DEEP WATERS

Miles La Croix was ill longer than the doctor had anticipated. Fever came and then delirium.

One day, almost a week from the date of Crashaw's untimely encounter with Moina, Passauf, who had paid his usual daily call, returned again after less than a two hours' absence. He brought a letter for Moina, and insisted upon putting it into her own hands.

"I am bidden to say," began Passauf, "that this letter contains matter so important to Mr. La Croix and his welfare, that you can but serve him by giving it prompt attention. I will wait for your reply."

The tone more than the words impressed Moina. She took the note and opened it in his presence.

"Whatever it is," she thought, "he shall know that I have read it, and his messenger shall not see me disturbed." This is what she read:

"Miss La Croix:—Passauf reports that your father is growing delirious. If this continues, for his sake, for your own, and for the cause to which he is devoted, watch well this phase of his illness. A man of his temperament would be likely to rave of what has been much in his thoughts. If this is so, no stranger must hear such ravings. Everything depends upon your caution. You have employed a trained nurse; he must be dismissed. I can send you a man who is competent and safe. But it would be wiser to let only those attend him

who have nothing to learn from his ravings. Do not ignore this, for your father's sake and safety.

"CRASHAW."

Moina stood in silence for a moment, holding the letter in her hand.

"That letter," observed Passauf, "must be destroyed."

She held it out to him without a second glance. "Take it," she said.

"And your reply?"

"Say to Mr. Crashaw that I understand him. No one save myself will attend my father in his waking moments. I shall do nothing to endanger my father's life, health or safety, he may be assured."

"And is that all?"

"That is all."

When he had gone, Moina dispatched a note to Rene Savareis.

"Come at once," it said, "upon receipt of this." Then she went back to her father's bedside and, although he was passive and seemed to be sleeping, she did not once leave him until Margot came softly to announce Savareis.

"You were long in coming," was her greeting, as she entered the little second floor drawing-room, where she had bidden Margot bring him.

"I was out when your note came. Am I too late? I lost no time, I assure you," he said, anxiously.

"You are in time," she replied. "And I am going to test your friendship. Do you know what Rufus Crashaw has written me?"

"He spoke to me of your father's delirium, of its possible consequences. I can guess what he might have written."

"To make it certain, I will tell you." She repeated almost word for word Crashaw's letter and her own reply.

"Oh," said Savareis quickly, "I wish you would let me help you."

"Will you? I sent for you to ask it. I could think of no other way. Can you? Oh, I can hardly talk coherently. He is resting now—I mean my father, but he may wake at any moment. He has only muttered vaguely as yet, but this may change. Tell me; can you come here and stay until this delirium passes?"

She stopped abruptly; he had approached and taken her hand gently between both his own.

"Let us not exaggerate anything," he said; "there is possible danger, to be sure. He may say what a stranger should not hear, and he may only mutter incoherencies."

"He will not," she broke in, "unless the fever leaves him at once. He will pass from incoherence into random talk as distinct as your words and mine. He will talk of his interests, his anxieties, everything."

"Then I shall know how to explain things to the nurse whom, of course, you cannot altogether dispense with. During his wakeful moments, you and I will sit in his room, keeping the nurse within call, but out of hearing. When he sleeps, the nurse may take the watch, with myself always near at hand to be aroused at once if he should chance to wake."

Moina's worst fears proved well-founded. The fever did not abate for several days, and during that time the sick man laid bare his very heart before his daughter and Rene Savareis; all his enthusiasm, his hopes, his fears, his doubts. After that sickness Moina La Croix could never say that she did not understand her father, better even than he understood himself.

"All this is safe with me," whispered Rene, when they stood one night beside the bed, both pale and startled because of what they were listening to. "Some day, when this is over, perhaps you will let me tell you a little

about myself, so that you may know how well I understand your position. And until then, trust me, look upon me as a safe friend; a brother if you will."

"Oh," she said putting out a hand to him, "what would I have done, what could I do now, without you? If I did not trust you fully, I could not bear it."

She did trust him fully; nevertheless she did not know that on the evening that she saw him installed under Miles La Croix' roof as assistant nurse or guardian, he sent to Rufus Crashaw the following lines:

"At Miss La Croix' request, I shall remain here and share her watch at her father's bedside. The nurse proper will only attend him during his hours of sleep. I think you need feel no further anxiety; all our interests, at present, are identical. You, will of course, look to the business of those two meetings. At present, I can best serve the Cause here. SAVAREIS."

While her father's illness and delirium was at its height, Moina received a second note from Madeline Payne. It informed her that Mr. Lord was soon to leave the city; that the house on Fifth Avenue was to be closed; that Mrs. Ralston, in company with Mrs. Girard, was contemplating a visit to the country; and that she, Madeline, had decided to remain in the city, possibly taking up her abode in one of the Avenue hotels, where she should hope once more to receive Moina. This letter occasioned Moina some mental agitation, but she forced it out of her mind as much as might be, all her strength and time and thought being needed for her long vigil. Two days later the fever began to abate, and after that the change for the better was rapid. The delirium became once more incoherent, the murmurings less and less frequent.

"The worst is over," the doctor said. "In a few more days he will be his mental self again; in another week

he will be up; not strong, of course, and needing the same quiet and careful tending. But his recovery will be rapid."

And now a new trouble possessed her. She shut herself up in her room, and faced it and fought it, and took a desperate resolve. The book in her father's study, the book in which her own hand had written so many names, she now knew to be a record of those who were enemies, were dangerous to the cause; a list of marked men. In some manner, and at times suited to the convenience of the leaders, these men were to be made examples of; how, she did not know, and she feared to exercise her imagination. Upon one point she was determined: Mr. Lord must be warned. She had eaten his bread, and he had been kind to her. He was the friend of her friend. At any cost to herself, he must be warned. Her father would never be suspected, would never know. She would act with the greatest precaution, but she would act.

Safely locked in her own room, she penned the following lines:

"MR. LORD, Sir:— The writer of this has discovered, quite by chance, that you are in danger, and your property also. Do not leave your house unprotected, and look well to yourself. Do not go abroad at night, nor remain much alone. Your enemies are many.

"A FRIEND."

CHAPTER XXXII

A NIGHT AT OHM'S

"The deal's mine, Dandy."

"No, it's mine."

"Take it, then, and give us a light."

"Give us a drink, Oi say. Here Jumpin' Jack, bring on some more beer."

"Let's stop to drink 'em. Mike don't treat every two minutes."

"Hold on. Listen to Muldoon in there. What's he racketin' now?"

"Oh, niver moind him."

"That's what Oi say. What's the good o' so much chin? When it comes to business, Oi'm ready. Talkin'll never give the poor laborin' man his rights. Ain't that so, Cully?"

The man addressed as "Cully" sat with his elbows resting upon his knees, leaning forward and seeming to be intent upon a game of cards which had been progressing at the table around which four men were seated—the four who had uttered the remarks as set down above. There were other similar tables in the long, low, smoke-grimed room, and all of them more or less occupied by men, for the most part coarse, ill-dressed, and belonging manifestly to the lower, if not the lowest, type of humanity.

The table where "Cully" and his friends sat was at the extreme end of the room, and nearer than any of

the others to a large, double doorway opening into a rear apartment, not so large as the other and differently furnished. Benches were ranged around three sides of the room, and near the rear wall was a table, behind which were two or three chairs, two of them occupied at that moment, and the third was pushed back behind a big, portly fellow, who was lustily haranguing the dozen or more men lounging upon the benches, and emphasizing, with his fist, upon the table before him. As the card-players at the table near the door resumed their game, the young man designated as "Cully" turned his attention to this inner room. The speaker was a Polish Jew, small and wizened; his English was broken but easily understood, his voice was shrill and cracked. The motto of anarchism, he said, was the destruction of the present social condition. This object, to be sure, could not be attained easily. But the workingmen were in the majority. They could rule the world if they wanted to, if they only had the sense to dare it. There were certain obstacles to be removed. The capitalistic press continually deceived the people. It lied so much that the workingman who read it was frightened and would have nothing to do with anarchists, who were the real and the only true friends of the people. At this point, "Cully" drew his chair away from the table and nearer the door of the inner room.

"Look at 'Cully,'" whispered one of the players. "He's gettin' his eddication."

"They ride by you in their coaches, and their fine ladies in their silks and diamonds stare at you, and wouldn't touch your wives and daughters with a finger-tip. Why are they better than we? If we took their money, couldn't our girls dress and flirt as well as theirs? Couldn't we drive their horses and drink fine wines and fancy drinks, and, bribe judges and run for

office, if we had their money? And couldn't we have it? Why, to-day, here in this city, there are enough of us, enough laboring men, poor, oppressed, pinched by want and work, if they stood up together in one body against them, to take away their homes, their mills, and railroads, and factories, in spite of their police, and their soldiers, and their laws." The shrill voice ceased abruptly. The orator looked about him a moment, and sat down. Then there was a movement within the room. Evidently a recess was to be taken. Some of the listeners clustered about the table and began a wordy discussion. The others by twos and threes sauntered out into the saloon proper, and approached the bar, or scattered about the tables. The man "Cully" got up and went forward slowly to the rear of one of the groups. Two men paused at the bar just in front of him.

"No, thank-ee," he heard one of them say. "I'll not stop for any more. I'll get me home." The speaker was a tall man dressed like a workman and with a grimy but honest face. "Cully" passed him, and went out upon the street. In a moment the workman also came out. "Well, comrade," said the young man, "and so you've had enough of anarchy too. Don't mind my walking alongside, I hope?"

"Not a bit," replied the workman, after casting upon the other a quick, keen glance. "Fact is," he added—referring to his companion's first remark—"fact is, a man, a thinkin' man, wants to take that sort o' thing in small doses, and kin' o' digest it as he goes along. Ye're a union man, I take it?"

"Well, not exactly," said the other. "I'm rather new here, and am just lookin' around, sort of tryin' to make up my mind where I do want ter stand. This 'ere business is gettin' a good deal like religion."

"Ha, ha! Jest so. Got to jine the church or go to—blazes!"

The workman chuckled over his fine point.

"I don't know's I take in quite all them fellows say," went on "Cully," as if arguing with himself, "and still, a man don't 'pear to stand much chance of gettin' work till he is a union man. And then there's the fund, if he happens to get sick or hurt."

"Yes," said the other, "there's the fund as ye say. Only ye can't always count on the fund."

"Eh!"

"Just let me give you a bit of my experience. I've been in the union, and I've been out of it."

"And are you in it now?"

"Yes, I'm in it now. I've got a wife and little ones" —there was positive bitterness in the man's voice, "but if I ever go out again I stay out, and I may astonish some folks."

"You was goin' to tell somethin'?"

"Yes; it won't take long, the way I'll tell it. I jined the union as soon as I was married; thought I'd orter. I had a chum, lived next door, married like myself, and we worked together. Nobody gave more money 'cordin' to our pile, nor was more interested in unions than we was. But after awhile, a lot of blowhards got to runnin' things, and sendin' us on fool strikes, till we got sick of it. It ain't so fine for a workman that can command good wages right along to have to lay idle about half his time because a few grumblers want a strike. And that's what it finally came to. And when the big strike come on, over the boss takin' on a few non-union men, my mate and me did try to prevent that. But all the same, we went out peaceable enough with the rest."

"Was that a city strike?"

"No; it wan't here. I didn't live here then. Well,

after awhile a man we both knew, a good honest fellow, got sick and his savin's run out, and Jim and me went to the secretary to get him some help. Well, sir, this is the answer we got: 'The sick man had got a sewin'-machine and a carpet in his parlor, and the help was for them that was poor.' 'You're helpin' Pete Slavin,' I said. Slavin was a poor, worthless sot, who drank up all he could when he was sober enough to work, and was first and foremost in every strike or talk of one. 'Yes,' they said, 'Pete had nothing, and them was the ones to help.' So Jim and me must help pay for Pete Slavin's strikes and sprees. That got my mate's blood up."

"I should say!" put in "Cully."

"Yes sir. He just swore 't he'd never set foot in the lodge room agin, and he'd go right on workin' and would like to see 'em stop him. He did go back to work that very day—" here the narrator paused and sighed, "and before the week was out they fetched him home, feet foremost."

"Killed?"

"No; only thumped half-dead. He was out again in about a month, but that got my mad up, too, and—well, their strike was a failure, and they blamed us for it."

"These big strikes mostly do end so. The old men come back, beat or no beat. The bosses of course always swear to stand by the non-union men that's helped 'em through, but the bosses find it cheapest to give in in the end. The union men won't work with scabs, and so the scabs get weeded out kind of on the sly. The union men promises big, and the scab has to go."

"Yes," agreed "Cully." "That's the way."

"That was the way with me," said the other. "I tried two or three cities, and my mate took to roving too. Finally I came here, but I hadn't no union ticket, and

I couldn't hold a place long. Winter was comin'. I had a family to keep." He paused and sighed heavily; "I had to give in. I had to go into another union."

"Well," said "Cully," with equal ruefulness, "I expect that's about how I'll pan out."

"See here," said the other, earnestly; "you're a single man, ain't ye?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, take my advice. Tough it out; keep out of it. I tell ye the unions ain't what they was at first. Now, it's strike here and strike there, and you're called upon to do things like as not that a man hates to think of." He stopped like one whose enthusiasm has led him too far. "Maybe I'm taking you out of your way," he said in an altered tone. But the other protested against this, and was so frank, so eager for advice and information that his companion thawed again, and before they parted they had exchanged names and agreed to meet again on the following evening at this Ohm's saloon.

When our friend, "Cully," found himself alone upon the street he consulted a shabby silver time-piece, and turned his steps once more toward Ohm's. As he paused before the bar, with due deference to the proprietors of the place, he could hear the words uttered by two men sitting at a table just behind him.

"Yes," said one, "we all knew he was a non-union man and he had plenty of hints, but he was stubborn and wouldn't join."

"Why didn't ye punch his head?" asked the other, with a drunken leer.

"Oh, we fixed him. One of the fellows on a 'local' was put up to drop upon his time. He played it well, lagged behind, you know, pretendin' his engine wouldn't fire. Bill ran into him and scattered about a dozen cars for

him. Bill got his head broke badly, and like to broke his neck. His brakeman did get killed."

"Cully" gave himself an angry shake and sauntered on toward the inner room. All the benches were occupied now, and many were standing, and almost to a man the listeners were stimulated to zeal, anger, enthusiasm, quite as much by the liquor they had imbibed as by the fire and force of the speaker. The place was nothing less than a school, a hot-bed of anarchy.

Not far from the doorway, standing erect and immovable, with the whole length of the saloon between himself and the door of entrance, stood a solitary policeman.

"Fool," was the word that broke involuntarily from "Cully's" lips, and then he was hustled aside.

The crowd from the inner room ranged about him and the unlucky officer. Bedlam reigned.

"A policeman!"

"A spy!"

"Kill him!"

Some one wrested his whistle from his hand as he was about to put it to his lips. He stood surrounded by menacing faces, brandished fists, knives, pistols.

"Try to keep them at bay," whispered some one close beside him; "try to work back toward the door."

"Don't shoot," cried some one; "You'll bring more cops."

"Back to back," whispered the officer's champion. "I'll face the door, keep close to me."

And then "Cully" wheeled suddenly, placed his back against that of the officer, and faced the crowd, with a revolver in either hand. "Stand back!" he cried. "Fair play! shame on you! Thirty men to one!"

The anarchists were not all warriors; they were not all brave. There were only two against them, but these two held each a pair of formidable-looking weapons.

"Cully," with his resolute face and his two six-shooters, looked dangerous, and as he pressed toward the door, the officer keeping close at his back, the crowd gave way before him.

"Trip up his legs," cried some one.

"I'll shoot the first man that tries it," said the officer.

But now the barkeeper, fully aroused, asserted himself. He had come from behind the bar and moved toward the door on tiptoes. With a hand on the latch he paused and seemed to listen. Suddenly he sprang back, waving his arms frantically.

"The back way, boys," he shouted. "The cops are coming."

At the same moment and greatly to his surprise, the street door was thrown open and a pistol shot rang out.

It was enough. The audience of the burning orator, with the orator at its head, heedless of the order of their going, rushed back to the inner room and from thence into a friendly alley. While they were still pushing and crowding at the narrow rear door, the officer and "Cully" faced each other. "Did you fire?" asked the policeman.

'Yes, in the air. It helped. But they'll be back again. Don't stay here."

"I'll come back myself," said the officer, pocketing one pistol and keeping the other discreetly in hand, "and bring back a force."

"Bring 'em," said "Cully," putting away his weapons and turning carelessly away.

The man who had opened the street door in the face of the astonished barkeeper, still stood on the threshold. He beckoned to the policeman, who approached him at once.

"Come outside," said the new-comer shortly. When

they were upon the street, he said: "Your orders were, not to enter that place, except in case of riot."

"They were holding a bloody anarchist meeting," argued the officer; "I wanted to get evidence."

"That's my business," said the other. "Now go on, and don't repeat this; you'll spoil everything."

When the officer had moved away, the man of authority turned back and entered the saloon. He was a tall man in shabbily rakish garments, his face half covered by a growth of stubby beard. He dropped upon a chair near the door and turned a careless gaze upon our friend "Cully," who now stood beside the bar. The rum-dispenser was again in his place, and was pouring out a glass of something for "Cully."

"What did you take that cop's part for?" he asked sourly, as he pushed the glass near to his customer.

"Cully" laughed and looked at the glass.

"Cause I'm allers ready for a fair and square row," he said; "an' I don't see a gritty man get left; I ain't much on cops, but hang me if I'd see any man try to go it alone ag'in, a crowd." He drained the glass and set it down.

"Well," said the barkeeper, "all I say is, don't show your phiz around here until this thing blows over. The boys might be hard on you."

"Cully" laughed derisively. "I'm comin' here to-morrow night," he said; I've got an appointment."

"You'd better not. The boys 'll be likely to accuse you of being a spy; of tryin' to jump both ways."

"Look ahere, my friend," said "Cully," "if any doubts me just let him speak up, I'm ready for 'em; I'm one of them and they know it. The first one that accuses me 'll git this."

The barkeeper started back as the cold muzzle of a revolver was suddenly thrust under his nose, and before

he had recovered himself, "Cully," with a defiant burst of laughter, turned upon his heel and swaggered out.

Instantly and silently the stranger followed.

It was late and the streets were almost deserted. "Cully" soon turned down a narrow thoroughfare. At about the middle of the block, where the light was dimmest, there was a narrow alley to be crossed, and just at this alley two men suddenly sprang upon him. Taken unawares he was borne to the ground beneath a rain of blows. He struggled manfully, and, seeing something glittering in the hand of one of his assailants, he called loudly.

His call was answered close at hand. A powerful blow felled one of his assailants, and the grip of two strong hands about the throat of the second caused the rascal to loose his hold and utter an inarticulate howl for mercy.

"Are you much hurt?" asked the new-comer breathlessly. And seeing the assailed man struggle to a sitting posture, he flung the second assailant from him, saying "Be off, then, and quick, or I'll make an end of you."

The fellow rushed away without a glance at his prostrate and motionless companion, and the rescuer bent down and whispered eagerly: "Kenneth, old boy, are you badly hurt?"

"Eh, what?" making an effort to get upon his feet. "Good heavens! Drexel, is that you?"

"Yes, it's I. Let me help you, Ken. What is it?"

"I—I'm afraid my shoulder is broken or dislocated. Confound those fellows!" He groaned and almost sank down again.

"Lean on me," said Drexel; "let me help you to those steps; I've got some brandy. There, sit down a moment. Do you think you can walk at all?"

"Yes, after a little. I'm badly shaken up, but my legs

are all right I think; let me rest here and go and take a look at that fellow. Have you killed him?"

"If I have," said Drexel, "there's one revolutionist the less. Those fellows followed you from Ohm's place."

He bent above the prostrate man and felt for his hands and his breast. "Ho! it's the man with the knife. No, he's only stunned, Ken, and he'll do very well where he is. I'll send a policeman to look after him when we run across one. They seem to be scarce about here. As soon as you can walk, we'll move a little away from here, and then I'll get a carriage."

When they were moving slowly away, Kenneth leaning heavily upon his companion's arm, limping at every step, and wincing with the pain, he asked:

"How came you on the scene, Drexel? I can't understand it."

"I've been on the scene more or less for a few days," replied Drexel; "and to-night, even without this adventure, I meant to place myself in evidence. What did you do to provoke that assault?"

Kenneth related briefly, and laying light stress on his own part in the affair, the occurrence of the policeman's visit.

Drexel refrained from comment until they had found a cab and were driving toward Hosmer's quarters. Then he said:

"Well, what do you think of socialism by this time?"

"Old man," he said, "I was wrong and you right. The ideal socialism does not exist, except in the brains of a few idiots like myself. The real socialism is a festering horror."

"You have progressed rapidly, Ken."

"Thanks to you, Chris. Ohm's is a good school."

"So you are ready to drop the business?"

"No, I am going on."

'Ken, what folly!"

"I must! Oh, don't think it won't be a punishment, but I can't draw back if I would. I'm in the maelstrom. There are others besides you, Drexel, who have their eyes upon me."

Drexel thought of the morning that he had seen his friend at Miles La Croix' door with Crashaw and Savareis, and sighed.

"At any rate," he said, "you were not in earnest about going back to Ohm's."

"I was, Drexel; I met a man to-night who interests me; I want to see more of him; we were to meet at Ohm's; when I get this shoulder dressed, and feel a little easier, I'll tell you about him; I wish you could see him."

"Well, Ken, at least you won't present yourself at Ohm's to-morrow night, nor anywhere else I'm thinking. But I'll hear about your new acquaintance, and if it seems worth while, I'll be your proxy at Ohm's. I'll meet him at the rendezvous."

Hosmer leaned back in the carriage; he was dizzy and faint yet, and it cost him an effort to keep his thoughts in order. But something still troubles him.

"Old man," he said after a time, "were you aiming at this when you sent me into that den of cut throats?"

"No, Ken; I warned you to keep out of mischief. Why should I grudge you a whole head?"

"You know what I mean; was it a cure you intended?"

"Yes, Ken."

"And you talk about this new movement, and feeling the pulse of the enemies—was that all evil?"

"Ken, you're in no condition to talk now, and I will only say this: There's mischief brewing. Lives and property, the peace of our city and our country per-

haps, are threatened; I'm lending a hand to help avert the mischief, I'm trying to make amends."

"Roger is there? I want to lend a hand. Can't I?"

"Are you willing to 'go it blind'—to do genuine detective work and ask no questions?"

"Yes; anything."

"All right, Ken. When your head is well again, we'll talk."

CHAPTER XXXIII

A NEW TERROR

Miles La Croix, the Miles La Croix who had lain down upon that sick bed, never arose again. As the doctor had predicted, he rallied soon, and physically he was a stronger man than before, but the change in him was soon apparent to Moina and to others—a change as strange as it was terrible.

He had laid his head upon his pillow a fortnight since, an enthusiast, a dreamer, eager to immolate himself, if need be, in what he believed the "good cause,"—the cause of humanity—but scrupulous as to the means, resolute against brutal measures, deprecating all force and violence. What fine chord had snapped under that mental strain, that struggle between love for his cause and love for all mankind?

Doubtless the fierce puritans who worshiped the Lord with their lips and heaped up burning fagots about the luckless witches, with their hands, believed in themselves. We have no record of a doubtful witch-burner. And even so, Miles La Croix believed himself born anew, appointed to a work. Pitiful no longer, the angel within him slain or fled, he was now a fanatic, an avenger, a madman.

Only where his daughter was concerned did he show any tenderness, and even here he was changed. He was less nervous than before, less excitable. He never complained of fatigue now, never refused to see visitors.

And always there burned in his eyes a somber fire, a restless energy.

"My father is mad," said poor Moina.

But a commission of lunacy would have been slow to declare Miles La Croix insane. Never was there a more methodical madman. And now Rufus Crashaw was recalled, and Moina's humiliation began. He came and went freely every day, and twice a day, and often not alone. Down-stairs, in the little room behind the studio, long consultations were held, and almost every evening Miles La Croix and Crashaw went out together.

Shut up in her own room, cut off from outside help, or relaxation, her mind filled with horror at the change in her father, and at the revelations of the sick-room, heart-sick, and full of forebodings, Moina La Croix almost feared for her own reason. And then as sorrow made room for thought, the natural resistance of a young, vigorous and honest mind in a strong, healthy body, began to assert itself. She was a girl, and alone, with her father estranged, and in the midst of foes, for she now began to look upon all the socialists, with Crashaw at their head, as enemies.

Even Rene Savareis she counted as arrayed against her. That her father was mad, she firmly believed. But how could she make others believe with her? The doctor, who had never known Miles La Croix before his illness, and who therefore saw no change in him, only smiled when she questioned him about her father's mental condition.

"Your father has a strong mind," he said sagely, "and a stronger will."

What could she do? If only she could consult Madeline Payne, and that kind Mrs. Ralston. But Madeline had not been heard from after that second letter, and she did not know where to write her. And then remem-

bering with a shudder what she had heard at her father's bedside, she sighed.

"No, I dare not go to her even if I could; I shall dread to meet her."

But brave blood flowed in Moina's veins. She would not give up to despair without a struggle. She determined to face the situation, to defend her father, and to fight as but she could, Rufus Crashaw and his newly acquired influence.

And so a fortnight passed, two weeks since her father arose from his sick bed, more than a month since the catastrophe at Mr. Lord's, of which Moina had not heard a whisper.

Mrs. Ralston, convalscent but still nervous from the shock of the explosion, remained secluded and content at Olive Lord's.

Madeline Payne had been for more than a week established at the Occidental, with a hired companion and her maid. Mr. Lord had been for days an inmate of a retired mountain cottage, weak, languid, but recovering, and with Dr. Vaughan in attendance.

The mansion on Fifth Avenue had not been closed. Mr. Lord had left his home without sound of trumpets, and was believed by all save a few chosen friends, to be still at home but indisposed. Henry, the footman, had been left in charge. The housekeeper, cook, and housemaid, were still at their posts and regularly, in the morning, the curtains and shutters in the drawing-room and dining-room were opened to the daylight, and in the evening, the lamps were lighted in all the lower rooms, and in Mr. Lord's chamber and dressing-room above.

The better to carry out the fiction of his presence and and to guard as well the steel safe sunk into the wall of his bedroom, Mr. Lord had installed Henry in his rooms, and there each night the faithful English butler, mind-

ful of the dignity of his surroundings, went early to bed in gingerly and solemn state, sleeping soundly, and never dreaming, poor man, of the gleaming dagger that less than a year ago had quivered in the wood above the head of his sleeping master, above the very pillow where his own head now lay.

One evening, as he was about to extinguish the lights in the dining-room, where nobody had dined, Henry heard the door-bell and hastened to answer it. He had received minute instructions as to possible visitors, and knew quite well how to receive them, whatever their mission might be.

Upon the threshold he found an old man, tall and erect of carriage, with long white hair and brilliant eyes.

"I wish to see Mr. Elias Lord," said this stately personage.

"Hi'm very sorry, sir, but Mr. Lord is not at 'ome this hevening."

"Will he be at home soon?"

"Hi think not, sir. Hit won't be till quite late. Will you leave your name, sir?"

"That is quite unnecessary." The stranger hesitated a moment as if reluctant to go, and then: "I will, perhaps, call again," he said, and turned away.

Henry remained looking after him until he had disappeared in the darkness, and then he closed the door, muttering as he did so:

"Hi 'ad a good look hat 'im. Hi'd know him again, sure. Tall an' spare; white 'air, an' wot heyes!"

As the tall man walked away with a quick tread that was more nervous than strong, a small figure came out from the shadows across the way and followed him. Never too near and always near enough, keeping him always in view, with the care of an expert at the work. As they are crossing a little park, the old man pauses

again, looks about him and seats himself on a bench, just within the shadow of some clustering shrubbery. The spy also selects a bench a little aloof from the other, yet in full sight, and settles himself to wait.

A half-hour has passed and the old man has hardly stirred. The watcher fumes inwardly, but is constrained to stillness. He must not attract attention, and the little park is tenantless, except for these two. He stretches himself along the hard bench, with one arm for a pillow, and this proves his undoing. He has been a long time on guard near the house on the avenue, and he is tired; but he will not fall asleep, he thinks, not he. How still that old man sits. How warm it is. He stifles a yawn, looks, yawns in spite of himself, closes his eyes, as some one nears him crossing the park, and—sleeps.

When Miles La Croix reaches home it is long past midnight. He lets himself in with a latch key, pale and weary, all the fire gone out from his deep-set eyes.

A light burns dimly in the vestibule, and some one glides out from the studio, causing him to start.

"Moina!"

"Papa! is it you at last? How anxious I have been, and how tired you look! You are shivering too."

"Yes; a little chill; I wandered further than I meant."

"Wandered, papa? Were you not at the meeting?"

"The meeting?" He stared at her vacantly. "The meeting—we—no, we did not meet."

"Not meet? Why, Mr. Crashaw came for you. He said there was a special meeting. He thought he might overtake you. I told him you had just gone out, and he hurried away. Were you not with him?"

He began to mount the stairs slowly and with evident effort. "I am going to my room, Moina. Will you kindly pour me some wine when I am there? I am very tired—too tired to talk; I shall retire at once."

The girl knew this mood and followed him silently to his room, poured him his wine and looked to his comfort, as she was used to do whenever she was permitted to serve him, which, since his illness, had not been often. It was useless to question him, she knew; she bent over him and kissed his cheek, and he wearily returned the caress.

"Good night, papa," she said, "I must send Margot to bed. She is waiting up, poor thing. I'll look in again to see if you are comfortable."

Moina lingered below, filled with an anxiety that was unaccountable even to herself. Where had her father been, and upon what errand. That he had not seen Crashaw she was sure. It was not like him to go out in the evening and alone, without a word. It was not until she went in search of him, when Crashaw came, that she learned from Margot that he had gone.

The girl sighed heavily as she went back to her father's room. He was already asleep, with his head thrown back on the pillow, his white hair pushed back as if by a feverish hand. The light from a softly shaded lamp fell across those hands that moved slightly as if already he had entered dreamland.

She had brought a bowl of cooling drink. Putting this down she seated herself by the bedside and looked sadly down upon the wan, changed face.

Presently the sleeper moved, and began to murmur—broken words at first, and then intelligible fragments of sentences.

"Another symptom," thought Moina. "He never used to talk in his sleep." Then she started and almost held her breath; she had caught one word that had aroused all her faculties. "Sentenced." That was the word. She drew further back into the shadow now, and listened deliberately.

"Sentenced; yes. Twice do you say? Ah! it must be done then." His hands were moving as if writing. "But reason; try reason first." A long pause and then a profound sigh. "Who shall do it? Then I will see him; warn."

Moina's heart was beating wildly. Suddenly she remembered having heard or read that it was possible to converse with a sleeper who talked thus. She leaned forward and softly uttered the word he had spoken last.

"Warn?"

"Yes, warn; once more warn him. After that I say no more. Only—it must be I—I who does it."

"It? What?"

He did not heed. Some new idea now entered that irresponsible brain. He went through the movement of opening letters and muttering vaguely.

"Ah, here; I must put these on the book, the book where—"

"The book's here, papa, let me write for you," she breathed close to his ear.

"Yes, write."

"What shall I write? Read it to me."

"Sentenced, definitely—Acton Peasley, manufacturer, tyrant, employer of four hundred men, women and children—martyrs."

"Yes."

"Write next, Harlan Seynous, railway magnate."

"Sentenced?" she breathed.

"Yes."

"When?"

"Not settled, but soon. The others—never mind the others now. Peasley won't be hurt this time, and the next—"

He stopped and his lips moved silently, as was his waking habit when reading a letter not too plainly written.

He lay prone upon his back, and his voice, but for a certain monotone, was so clear and natural that she found it hard to believe him actually sleeping. She sat there for a long time, but there were no more distinct utterances. Presently he gave a nervous start and awoke.

She arose quickly and took up the cooling drink.

"Here is your sherbet, papa. Will you drink it now? I think you have slept a little."

He took the drink and quaffed it thirstily.

"Yes, he said, "I dropped asleep, and have been dreaming. That is one of my annoyances since my illness. I dream so much it tires me."

"Are the dreams unpleasant, papa?"

"I don't know; I think they must be, for I wake suddenly and with an uncomfortable sensation—an actual distress somewhere. There, my daughter, go away now. I need nothing more."

When Moina was locked in her own room, she sank down upon her knees beside her bed, and buried her face among the pillows.

"I have found a way," she murmured; "I have found a way." Heaven help me, and heaven forgive me. "Sentenced!" no wonder my poor father is no longer himself. I must save these men. I must! And I must save my father. Oh, Gracious God! give me help. Raise up for me, somewhere, one friend, just one, for I am desolate, and evil is all about me!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

A NEW VICTIM

Mrs. Marvin, Mr. Lord's housekeeper, arose as usual on the morning following the visit of the tall old man, and was not slow to discover that Harvey was not, as usual, visible and active about his duties. Cook was at work in the pantry, the housemaid was sweeping down the front stairs. Mrs. Marvin went with much dignity to the door of her master's room, and, before knocking, listened for any sound within. All was still, and she applied her knuckles to the panel with some asperity.

Still no sound. She knocked again, a double knock this time, but with no better success.

Startled yet emboldened by this strange silence, she put her hand upon the door-knob, hesitated, then tried the door. To her surprise it opened at her touch—opened, and swung wide as her hand released the knob. And the next moment Mrs. Marvin was running wildly down the stairs.

"I don't know to this day how I managed," she used to say afterward, "but I did manage to get that girl off for a policeman, and for Mr. Fallingsbee, without a panic. 'If anything goes wrong, send at once for Mr. Fallingsbee.' These were Mr. Lord's very words, and I managed to do my duty."

Having done her duty, very little remained for Mrs. Marvin but a mass of nerves and confused utterances.

Mr. Fallingsbee, who lived close by, was promptly at

hand; and the housemaid, panting and perspiring, marshaled in two policemen.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Fallingsbee and the foremost of the officers, in a breath.

Mrs. Marvin, gasping and on the verge of hysterics, reclined on one of the high-backed, vestibule chairs supported by the cook, who had been repeating over and over the same question. She lifted her face as they approached, and pointing upward, gasped:

"Harvey! murdered! go up."

Instantly Fallingsbee, who knew all of Mr. Lord's plans and arrangements, led the way upstairs.

The door of the chamber stood wide open as Mrs. Marvin had left it in her flight, and upon the threshold Mr. Fallingsbee paused horror-stricken.

No need to enter to see that death was there. Harvey was lying upon his back, his face turned away, his arms thrown out as if there had been one moment of struggle, then instant surrender. His breast and the bed about his body were red with his life-blood, and the shining handle of a dagger still in the wound showed where the assassin had struck home.

"Suicide," suggested one of the policemen, pressing forward and bending over the corpse. But Mr. Fallingsbee was clearer sighted. "Murder," he said. And then he put his hand on that of the dead man. "Cold," he added. "Been dead for hours." Then he turned to the officers of the law. "Mr. Lord left me in charge here, in case of any unforeseen event; I was empowered to act for him. Heaven knows this is unforeseen. You understand—that is why the housekeeper sent at once for me."

The two men nodded.

"In the first place, will one of you mount guard at the

door? We must keep out the curious. I shall send at once for a detective and the coroner."

The two policemen nodded again, and exchanged glances of approval.

"I shall also send for Madeline Payne," said Mr. Fallinsgbee, sotto voce, as he began to look around the room.

Everything was in order. Not an article of furniture was out of place. Evidently there had been no struggle.

There was no horror on the dead face, no look of terror or surprise. The assassin must have crept upon a sleeping victim, entering without noise. And how had he entered?

Turning the frightened but curious women out of the room of death, Mr. Fallingsbee and the officer who had remained with him, went below and began a tour of the basement floor.

Doors and windows seemed intact. The policeman tried them, one after another.

"Must have had skeleton keys," he said.

"Nonsense, man. Don't you see that every door has strong double inner bolts, every window a burglar alarm, all set and in good order? Let us go to the rear."

At the back of the house, a small hall with a solid, well-barred door, opened on the rear yard.

On each side of the door was a narrow slit of window, which Mr. Lord immediately after the visit of the man of the "dagger and the letter," had protected thoroughly with a net-work of light iron bars upon the inside. The transom above was similarly guarded, but the bars here were further apart and set in a light frame, which moved upon hinges, opening inwards, so that the transom, in its turn, might open to admit air during the heated days.

"Ah," said the officer, "here we have it." He pointed

to the door. The key was turned, the bolts drawn. He opened the door and looked out, drawing back instantly at a word from Mr. Fallingsbee.

"Look there," said that gentleman pointing upward.

The frame-work of iron was swinging loosely, and half of the single pane of glass that had filled the transom was gone.

"That's it", said the officer. "There's a boy in the business, and it must have been a mighty small one, too. The piece of glass is just outside."

Mr. Fallingsbee turns away.

"Let's go back," he said, "and leave the rest to the detective when he comes."

"We might question the women," suggested the officer, who seemed much inclined to enact the role of detective, himself.

"No," objected Mr. Fallingsbee; "they will get their evidence mixed enough without too many questioners. Besides, one of them perhaps, has neglected to close that transom screen. If we put her on her guard she will deny it. The murderer came in through this door. We will wait for the details."

It was understood between Madeline and Drexel that he was not to see her at her hotel, where he would sometimes pay a visit to the Princess Sacha Orloff. They were to communicate by letter as often as necessary, and, if a meeting seemed best, they would select a safe and neutral ground—Olive Lord's cozy library.

Early as was the hour, Madeline was preparing to go out when the messenger arrived with a note from Mr. Fallingsbee. She tore it open eagerly, and read:

MISS PAYNE:—Harvey has been murdered in his bed. According to my understanding with Mr. Lord, you are in

his confidence, and may, perhaps, be of assistance in our investigation. Come at once, if possible. Do you know where to find Hurst? If so, send for him.

"FALLINGSBEE."

"Horrible!" exclaimed the girl. And in almost the same breath, "How fortunate."

The first word was for poor Harvey, the last for herself. She had made a discovery, and had sent a note to Drexel, the evening before, asking him to meet her that morning early at Olive's. She had received a prompt reply. She knew she should find him there, and, flushed with excitement, she thrust the letter in her pocket and hastened to the rendezvous.

Drexel was there before her, and waiting impatiently. He had heard the horrible news, having arrived as Dr. Vaughan was setting out for the house on Fifth Avenue. "Let us go at once," he said. "My carriage is just around the corner. We can talk on the way."

When they were seated in the carriage, Madeline turned to him a troubled face.

"This is growing terrible," she said. "That seems a fated house." Then, she asked, "Do you know any of the particulars?"

"No; only that Harvey has been murdered."

"I am so anxious! I have had such a horrible thought."

"What is it?"

"Did you know that Mr. Lord had put Harvey in his own room to sleep?"

Drexel started.

"Good Heavens!" he cried. "Could he have been killed in that room?"

"The thought will not leave me that—" She paused and they looked at each other with shocked faces. Then she said: "Can you investigate there without arousing sus-

picion, or making yourself known to Mr. Fallingsbee as Hurst?"

"Fallingsbee will have to know sooner or later. But I have arranged for that. I have sent to Captain B— for a man who will seem to conduct the business, I working with him. The captain will send the right man, be sure."

She drew Mr. Fallingsbee's letter from her pocket and gave it to him.

"You see they want Mr. Hurst," she said.

"Be easy; they shall not have cause to complain. But it is well that you sent for me. And it was by the merest chance that I got your note. You have made some discoveries, I suppose. After I have satisfied myself about this murder, we must find time for a few words in the library. It may be our last interview for many days. Can you manage it?"

"Yes. You are going away then?"

He smiled oddly. "I am going into the lion's den," he replied. Then suddenly he asked: "How happens Vaughan to be at hand?"

Madeline blushed at the sudden mention of Dr. Vaughan's name. "You know he comes up twice a week," she said, "to look after his own affairs; he chanced to come yesterday and was going back this morning."

"He will have sorry news to carry to Lord."

"Yes. I suppose he must know it."

"He must, of course. And if it is as we fear, it will complicate matters for us."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE TWIN DAGGERS

Dr. Vaughan's examination left no doubts as to the murder. Harvey was slain in his sleep, struck once only, struggled once, and that was all. Even that one struggle must have been spasmodic. Only the nerves felt the blow, and responded to it; it was never recognized by the brain. And on the face still rested the relaxed, placid look of the sleeper.

The three women, housekeeper, cook, and maid slept on the third floor, and had not heard a sound during the night. That the rear door was locked and barred, Mrs. Marvin was certain. As to the transom-guard, she was not so sure. Harvey was the one to look after those things. If he had omitted this duty last night, he had been horribly punished for the slight omission. Certainly if the iron guard had been closed, the assassin could not have entered, or so it seemed. Evidently the assassin was no novice, no weakling. It was a steady, practiced hand that struck that blow. And he had left not a trace of himself.

Nothing had been stolen. Robbery was not the motive. What then could it have been? Harvey was almost a stranger in America. He had been heard to say that he had neither friends or relatives here, and only some distant cousins, whom he hardly knew, in England. He seldom went out, and received no visitors.

When Drexel and Madeline entered the room where

the dead man lay, Dr. Vaughan was standing near the bed. Lifting his eyes to Madeline's face, he saw her start and turn so white, that he feared she was about to faint. But she controlled herself, clinching her hands and biting her under lip. At the same instant a sharp exclamation broke from Drexel, and the two turned and faced each other. He, too, was pale, and the look they exchanged lingered long in Dr. Vaughan's memory, haunting and tormenting him.

Not a word was spoken, and after one more long look, Madeline turned and went dizzily from the room, to shut herself up alone in the library.

An hour passed, and Drexel came quietly in, and again for a moment the two faced each other in silence. Then Drexel said gravely:

"Elias Lord certainly bears a charmed life."

"You mean," she said, "that his life is the price of poor Harvey's? "Oh, what a fatality!"

"Yes. It is horrible. It could not well be worse. As I live, Miss Payne, I believe that two innocent, honest men have been sacrificed in the attempt to reach Mr. Lord."

"Two?"

"Yes. Do you remember the old man who was assassinated last fall, as he was returning from church?"

"Certainly."

"That murder seemed like this, without motive. It was clearly proved at the trial, that the murderer did not even know his victim. Jacob Traill might be alive to-day if he had not borne a fatal resemblance to Mr. Lord."

"Good heavens."

"And I believe Harvey would be alive too, if he had not slept last night in Elias Lord's bed."

"Oh, this is too horrible! Something must be done."

"Something shall be done," he said grimly, "and at once. We dare not dally now; it is time for extreme measures." He drew a chair forward. "Sit down and let us talk as fast as possible. There must be no more vexatious slaying of Mr. Lord, if we can prevent it. And unless the villains are trapped and rendered harmless, there will be other deeds like this. I fear that we cannot keep this matter out of the newspapers. When it is known that Elias Lord's footman has been murdered in Elias Lord's chamber, the terrorists will know that they have missed for the third time, the man they evidently intended to make a terrible example of. And that knife—"

"Ah, that knife," sighed Madeline. "It is like, it is precisely like the one I have—the one left in the head of Mr. Lord's bed."

"Of course. Perhaps it was left by the same hand. At any rate it is the fac-simile of the other, and for a good reason. That is the knife used by the executioners of a certain brotherhood in Europe. In Europe, more than one poor victim has been found with that knife sticking in his heart. We have not got so well acquainted with it here—as yet. But it will come surely and soon, unless the tide of coming revolutionists from every corner of the universe is stopped—unless a strong hand puts down these leagues and brotherhoods and bonds, that are, to the trades-unions of years ago, as is the jungle panther to the pastured lamb.

"But to come back to the knife. Possibly as it is, some investigating reporter may see in this murder the method of the avengers, may reach the truth."

"One moment," she broke in; "is it not best that the truth be made public? Oh, I know Mr. Lord would not wish it. I can see, too, that it may make difficulties for you. But if such danger lurks all around us, if, as it is

more than probable, others are menaced; they may be attacked. Indeed, Mr. Lord told me, when he received that first warning letter, that two others had received similar ones."

"I remember."

"To make all the truth known now, would be to solemnly warn all who have any reason to fear the murderers."

"I agree with you, and yet, before this can be done, Mr. Lord must be consulted. He is out of harm's way now—but do you not know him better than to think that he will stay in hiding—for it amounts to that—if the truth be known? He will come back and face the danger, or he would not be Elias Lord."

"You are right," she said.

"We must consider this step well, you see. And first of all, Dr. Vaughan must be the one to bear this news. Before I go, I will put into your hands, a letter for Mr. Lord, from Hurst. You will ask Vaughan to deliver it. Mr. Lord's reply will come to you. Of course the city detectives must be allowed to take up this case, and manage it in their own way."

"And you?"

"Be sure I shall not be idle. My plans, as you know, were already laid. This latest outrage decides me to make the plunge at once. It is a bold step but I must trust to it. It is not enough to suspect these men; I must know, I must have proof. I will tell you just how we stand at present. But first; you sent for me. Tell me why?"

She looked at him with a shade of wistfulness. "Do you still doubt Moina La Croix?" she asked.

To her surprise he flushed and dropped his eyes.

"I am still in the dark," he said.

She took a letter from her pocket, and holding it in her clasped hands, began her story.

"Shortly before Mr. Lord left town a letter came, and Mrs. Marvin through some chance, received it at the door. In a fit of absentmindedness, she brought the letter into the library, here, and left it among a mass of papers then on the table. It was not until after Mr. Lord had gone, that I came upon this letter. I saw at once that it was directed in a woman's hand. It even struck me as a disguised hand. It was not the hand that had written the warning letters—of that I felt sure. Of course I sent it at once to Mr. Lord. I did not feel justified in opening it. I have just received it back. It is a note of warning."

"Another?"

"Yes, and from Moina La Croix." She put the letter into his hand. "As you will see, there is little or no attempt to disguise the writing of the letter itself, but the address upon the envelope is reversed. I have received several notes from Moina. You will find two of them with the letter, that you may verify, yourself."

He examined the letter of warning and the two notes attentively.

"How do you account for this half-disguise?" he asked.

"I had written to her that I was on the point of leaving Mr. Lord's house. Of course she could not dream that I would see the letter, but after writing it, second thoughts had suggested that I might still be here, that by chance I might see the outside of the letter. Hence the disguised address."

"Do you know how the letter came?"

"No; Mrs. Marvin could not or would not remember."

"This letter is a strong indication. I may keep it?"

"Of course."

"And how do you get on with the princess?"

"Better than I had dared to hope. The two women are very much alone. They accepted me in good faith; they actually court my acquaintance. I have jumped to one conclusion."

"Oh! and that?"

"Simply that the elder lady is not the mother of the younger."

Drexel smiled and held his peace.

"The respectful tenderness of each toward the other is too marked. They have not always stood toward each other in the same position as at present."

"You are very astute," he said.

"I am likely to find my new companion something more than a figure-head after all," she went on. "Madame Orloff's maid and mine are already confidantes. And my maid, in turn, confides in my companion. Yesterday, through this source, I learned something which may interest you. The elder lady is very melancholy. She tries to seem cheerful when with the younger, but she weeps much in secret; and she kisses and cries over a picture, which she hastily conceals from her so-called daughter, showing much fear and anxiety lest it be discovered."

Drexel started and an eager look came into his face. "In some way I must manage to see that picture," he said. "Thank you, Miss Payne. That item may be worth more than you think. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing."

"Then hear my report. First, as to our flower carrier. The boy, Frank Price, is still very ill; indeed, he knows no one, and lies in a half-stupor. I have talked privately with the surgeons, and they have examined very closely. They decide that the wound upon the head could not have been caused by a wagon pole, from its size and shape, nor was it the work of a horse's hoof. It is,

they declare, just such a blow as might have been inflicted by a heavy and knotted cane."

"Oh, horrible."

"The boy who was with him at the street corner, has not yet been discovered. Neither has the old Jew. As for Mr. Savareis, I have a shrewd detective lodged in the same house with him. He seems decidedly a young fellow of gentlemanly habits. He lives regularly, has few associates, and his part in the program seems to be that of a listener of and to the better class of socialists."

"He has a frank face."

"True, he has. And I fancy he may wake up some morning to find himself a dupe, rather than a co conspirator. He is in direct communication with the leaders. They are very guarded, but if Savareis can help us, be sure no movement of his will escape my detective."

Madeline sighed.

"For more than two weeks," he went on, "I have lost sight of the butternut-colored spy. And the Englishman is a baffling personage. I do not yet know where his local habitation may be, for the reason that he seems to perpetually shift about. He has an aid, a factotum, who is movable like himself. And there is another man, if not two, whom I have not seen. And now prepare to smile. For more than two weeks I have occupied, more or less, a room just opposite the house of Miles La Croix. My windows command its front. I have a strong glass and all the appliances of a detective camera."

"Oh!" Madeline's face betrayed her keen interest.

"I pass for a reporter," he went on, "and can come and go at all times unchallenged. I have seen Miss La Croix at the door and at her windows often. I have used my glass remorselessly. I know that she has been deeply troubled, that she suffers. Mr. La Croix has been

very ill. They have had a trained nurse, and this Rene Savareis was there constantly for almost two weeks. The Englishman paid one visit and only one, during Mr. La Croix's illness; after that his factotum called daily at the door for news. I have made the doctor's acquaintance; I have even stopped at the door and chatted with the little Swiss maid."

"But was that safe? Might they not recognize you?"

He laughed and put a hand up to his face.

"See what I have sacrificed in the cause."

He drew away his hand, and with it came beard and false mustache.

Madeline sat aghast at the transformation.

The fine, strong face, as smooth as a girl's, was very handsome, but very much unlike the mustached and bearded Roger Drexel she had known. The false beard was the fac-simile of the one he had worn for years, and no one could have guessed the truth.

"You are the first to see me as I am," he said, replacing the beard. "I live for the most part in disguise. And now, perhaps, I can tell you how the letter was left at the door."

"Ah, I wish you could!"

"Since the day after the explosion here, I have had this house watched continually. A very bright lad, especially trained for his work, has been on guard here every day and into the night, only relieved when necessary by another almost as able. This was done in the hope of detecting some messenger of the enemy in the act of leaving another warning, or of finding again our spy. Unfortunately it was the front only that was under Toole's eye. I dare say our assassin has prowled more than one night through the alley and so reached the rear door. Probably he has hung

HE DREW AWAY HIS HAND, AND WITH IT CAME BEARD AND FALSE MUSTACHE.—Moina, p. 218.

about here for many nights, waiting for what is liable to come in every house, sooner or later, an hour of relaxed vigilance, when some door or window will be forgotten, and the assassin furnished an entrance."

"Poor Harvey," sighed Madeline; "he has been so faithful, and to think that his first forgetful act or omission should cost him his life."

"Yes. It furnishes matter for a sermon. But about Toole. Through him I have been pretty well informed as regards the comers and goers here. One day early in the morning I followed Miss La Croix and her maid to within a few blocks of this house. It was during her father's illness, and I knew something urgent must be the cause of her early promenade. At a corner they separated, and the maid hurried away, while Miss La Croix sauntered slowly about until she came back. I chose to remain and look after the young lady, at a distance and unseen, of course. The maid's mission I learned from Toole, who described her minutely. She came here, rang the bell, gave some one who opened the door to her, a letter, and hurried away. The some one was probably Mrs. Marvin."

"Yes."

"And the letter—this one I hold in my hand. The dates correspond. But I must get on. Last night Toole had an adventure. At about nine o'clock a tall, old man, whom from his description I recognized at once as Mr. La Croix, rang at the door, and it being dark, Toole was near enough to see that Harvey answered the ring. There was a moment's parley, and then the tall man went away, followed by Toole. Mr. La Croix made slow and somewhat erratic progress, halting finally to rest in a little park that lay in his homeward route. The boy had been on guard all day and was tired. Mr. La Croix sat a long time, and the boy being obliged to keep

very still in order not to be discovered, found the situation too much for him. He fell asleep."

"Oh, how unfortunate!"

"Well, yes. When he awoke the old man had vanished. After running about frantically, in the hope of recovering his lost trail, Toole went back to his post. It was nearly midnight and past the time for his relief; we won't stop for details. Toole, upon getting back, saw in the shadow, what he at first took to be his substitute guard. But a nearer approach undeceived him. It was Miles La Croix returned—heaven only knows for what reason. He hung about for some time, walking to and fro opposite the house. Then he set off a second time, and you may be sure Toole did not lose him again. I had been off duty, or rather, on duty in another quarter of the city, and was loitering in the street not far from my own door, watching the movements across the way, where, although it was past midnight, Miss La Croix was up and moving about restlessly, as I could tell by the shifting lights in her room, and the shadows on the curtains; first in her own room, and then below. While thus occupied I saw the return of Mr. La Croix, closely followed by Toole, and was not slow in getting the latter up into my room, where I heard the whole story."

"And do you think—can it be—" She stopped unwilling to utter her thoughts.

"That La Croix entered here and killed Harvey? I am not prepared to say that. He may have a guilty knowledge of the affair. But he was alone, and the murderer never entered this house by the rear door without the assistance of a lad small enough to crawl through that narrow transom. Besides, Mr. La Croix has lately risen from a sick-bed; he is an old man; I doubt if he could have the nerve or the strength to strike such a blow. One

thing is certain, we must keep our knowledge to ourselves for the present. I intend to make a personal investigation."

"Poor Moina La Croix," said Madeline Payne; "she may be a revolutionist, or she may not be. All the same she has a heavy burden to carry. She may be a victim rather than a plotter; this letter looks like it. I pity her! I pity her!"

"And so do I," said Drexel. "If she is innocent she shall be vindicated; be sure of that."

A carriage drew up at the side entrance, just beyond the library window. Drexel looked out and then arose.

"The coroner has come," he said. "And—yes, the captain is with him. Now all will be arranged as I wish."

CHAPTER XXXVI

A COUNCIL OF THREE

"PARIS, FRANCE.

"TO ROGER DREXEL, ESQ. *My Dear Sir:* After some delay I am able to send you the information asked for, the greater part of it at least. The documents herewith inclosed, copies of reports from various sources, will, I hope, supply you with the desired information concerning the Socialist La Croix, as well as the various leaders of the higher circles in Vienna, Berlin and Paris. The report from Italy is not so full as I could have wished, still it may serve.

"As for the 'difficulty' you mention, I have encountered none. We keep a closer surveillance over our revolutionists here in Europe than you Americans, and our records are very complete.

"I think you will hear from my brother in St. Petersburg promptly, and you may rely on his using all the means at his command, in his effort to aid one who has rendered such inestimable service to his unworthy brother in times past.

"An important matter brought Ferrars, of London fame, to this city to confer with me, and from him I have this item: 'The leader local to London is one Sharlan, an idealist, a strange man, with some very good points, it is said.'

"I do not think the man Crashaw has figured in Paris, but Ferrars tells me Crashaw, the great iron-master, is still king of his forge somewhere in the heart of Eng-

land, a long way from London. He is sure that Crashaw the iron-master never dabbled in revolution, and thinks there must be some imposture somewhere.

"Apropos of all this, one Dr. Lugos who was conspicuous here for a time, is missing from Paris. He would hardly be safer in London than here, and is thought to be in America or Australia. He is a Russian, but calls himself a Pole. Big, strong, swarthy, with a rather imposing presence. Should he chance to be one of your American Coterie, you have to deal with a dangerous man. He stops at nothing. Once more let me repeat how glad I have been to do you this small service. May it not prove quite worthless, and hold me always

"Your debtor to command,

"J. A. Bollossy."

"St. Petersburg.

"Mr. Roger Drexel. *Sir:* At the request of my brother J. A. Bollossy, of the Paris detectives, I have made haste to gather for you fuller details concerning the Prince and Princess Orloff and others, than was contained in my first report to you. And this time I think we have exhausted our resourses. Hoping you may find the inclosed matter sufficient to serve your purposes, I am, my dear sir, Your obd't servant,

"Roual Bollossy."

"My Dear Mr. Hurst: I have reached the desired point and find Madam La Princess more than willing to drive with me—quite at my disposal indeed. I wait your instructions. M. P."

These three letters Roger Drexel read, one after the other, sitting alone long after midnight in his down town "den."

The first with its accompanying commentary evidence, seemed quite to his liking. He smiled over some of the "reports," and murmured as he laid them aside:

"I think they will carry me through. Heavens! what a wonderful system the Frenchmen have. If only ours was as complete and as rigid."

The second letter he laid aside without more than a glance at the "notes" inclosed.

"That must wait a little," he said. "One at a time."

After reading Madeline's brief note, he took up his pen and wrote:

"My Kind Helper: I shall see Madam La Princess to morrow at two P. M.; will you kindly engage her company for the next hour. Have her out of the hotel by half past three, and keep her safely away for at least an hour—longer if possible. Yours gratefully,

"Hurst."

"That must go as early as possible," he said to himself, and therefore a moment was lost in thought, evidently too serious to be reverie. As the result of this thinking, he penned another letter:

"My Dear Hosmer: Glad to hear that you are almost 'as good as new' once more. Those rascally Huns did you mischief enough, and got off too easy. Since you seem as ready for the fray as ever, I will give you another commission, if only to keep you out of mischief. I have got on amazingly with your friend, the worker in wood, and you were right in your surmises. There is some fact in connection with his second advent into the union that is a sore spot to him. He had a reason in urging you not to join. It may be worth our while to learn what it was. Another thing; he has a dread of a new phase of affairs, and is full of apprehension. His anxiety is almost greater than the cause he ascribes

it to. I wish you would look him up, and keep track of him. Don't pump him or seem over-anxious. Only keep him in evidence, in case of need. He lives at No. 76 Short street, a very humble cottage in a humble locality, and his full name is Joseph Parker. You won't be likely to see me for a few days. Don't be too conspicuous at Ohm's, and don't neglect Parker.

"Yours in good faith,

"ROGER."

When this was finished, he lighted a cigar and settled himself in a more comfortable chair, like one who intends to make a long sitting.

"I shall hardly see my bed to-night," he said, pulling the foreign letters toward him and taking up the first paper contained in the Paris report. "No sleep for me until I have mastered all these. I am entering the labyrinth with even less of a clue than was Ariadne's thread."

While Roger Drexel was thus occupied, a group of three men, sitting about a round table in a small room not far away, were, like him, "perverting the uses of the night."

The first of them was Rufus Crashaw; the second opposite him, his shadow, Passauf; and the third, a large man, with a decidedly military air.

Crashaw had just been reading aloud a hastily written and somewhat garbled account of the murder of the night before.

"It's unfortunate," said this military man after a moment of silence; "unfortunate altogether. And yet is any one to blame?"

"To blame? Well that's as you think. We ought to have been better informed. To think that the man has

been out of the city neary two weeks." This from Crashaw.

"You forget," interposed Passauf in his monotone voice; "it was not safe to reconnoiter over-much, since the explosion. There is every reason to suppose that the house would be watched."

"In my opinion," said the first speaker, "it has been unusual cunning displayed from the beginning. If Mr. Lord left his fine mansion so quietly that no one was aware of it, outside of his immediate household, and if the fact of his absence has remained unknown for two weeks, it is because there is a deliberate plot to hoodwink some one."

"Well," growled Crashaw, "it succeeded."

"Yes, it succeeded. Now, let me call your attention to two or three facts. Although that paper speaks several times of the man's absence 'on account of ill-health,' it does not once name or hint at his locality. Although Harvey—is not that the name?—was killed sleeping in his master's bed, and it's rather unusual for servants to occupy the apartments of their masters, no mention is made of the fact."

Passauf glanced down at the paper.

"True," he said. "It says, 'struck while asleep,' and 'assassinated in his bed;' even so. Then, although the weapon was unusual enough to be worthy of comment, it is merely spoken of as 'a knife' or 'the deadly weapon;' and they are careful not to hint at so much as a motive, possible or probable."

"Well," said Crashaw curtly, "what do you make out of all this?"

"Simply that we have some one other than the man Lord to deal with. This person does not play with his cards on the table, any more than ourselves. Ergo, we will do well to be on our guard."

"Bah!" said Crashaw. "We are beyond reach, in any case, even if—"

"Even if our agent is discovered, which is not very likely to happen. Don't be too confident; the man Lord has had repeated warnings, not to mention being nearly blown up. Rest assured the mind that framed that non-committal report of last night's affair saw the truth of it, and knows that knife was meant for the master. To trace the instigators, with all the data they must have, to us, that is to the leaders of the Revolutionists, is but a step. And they—"

"There is but one leader," said Crashaw with a sardonic grin, "and that is neither you nor I nor Passauf."

"Crashaw, don't flatter yourself. You are a capital diplomatist, but I shall not rest until I know who is looking into this thing. If it is the city police, I shall not be anxious. We know their methods. If it should be, say, a private detective—"

"Well?"

"I should make it the object of my life to identify him," said the military man with a sardonic smile.

"Precisely. Next, no further effort must be made at present to reach this man with forty lives. There must not even be a spy allowed near the premises."

"Then there is La Croix."

"I could not forget that; why, when Passauf and I accompanied him home, after that long and fiery harangue of yours, I thought the old man was preparing to declare himself out of the game. He was excited beyond anything I ever saw. He would commit himself to nothing, and forbade—forbade us, mind you, to act in any way without his orders." Again that silent chuckle. "Then came his sickness, and his wonderful transformation—Doctor, you are a man of science; how do you explain it?"

"These sudden and entire moral revulsions happen oftener than is supposed," said Lugas. "The man's mental balance was at best not of the strongest; he is old and in ill-health. His enthusiasm for 'The Cause' drew him one way, while his humanity and his scruples pulled another. Our lively argument wrought upon him strongly; he went away greatly excited and fever ensued. What is called conscience is killed in many ways. The man of scruples, the idealist succumbed with the fever, and in his place arose a fanatic, a man of one idea; the gray matter of the brain had undergone a change."

"A change indeed! Where we once had to deal with the 'Idealist,' we have now a 'Chief' after my own heart. We have only to suggest, and he adopts the idea as his own, and issues his orders. Life and property are as one to him now—eh, Passauf?"

Passauf nodded.

'Look out," cautioned Dr. Lugas. "In his condition most things must be as you suggested. He will not be apt to originate much in the way of ideas. But beware if he seizes upon some notion from another source, and in opposition to your wishes. There will be no obstinacy like his, then."

CHAPTER XXXVII

FERNAND MAKOFSKI LATE OF IRKUTSK

The La Croix, father and daughter, were at breakfast. The meal was almost finished when Margot entered and laid a card beside her master's plate. He took it up and read thereon:

"FERNAND MAKOFSKI."

Underneath this name were penciled these words, "Late of Irkutsk." He started at sight of the name, frowned, and seemed trying to remember something.

"Fernand Makofski," he repeated slowly aloud. And then after another moment of reflection, he said: "Show him here, Margot." He did not glance at Moina; he seemed to have forgotten her presence. A month ago she would have left the room, or asked his leave to stay. Now she did neither; she remained in her place, silent and seemingly as absent as himself.

Fernand Makofski was a man of goodly proportions, well-dressed and not ill-looking. His hair to be sure was dangerously near to that shade commonly called red, and his short bristling beard and bushy mustache were only a shade paler. He advanced easily, bowing low to Moina, and said in excellent and but slightly accented English:

"I had hoped that my name might be familiar, sir, although I personally am strange. The name of Miles La Croix has been known and honored by me for years."

"Your name haunts me," said his host. "It almost

seems that I have known you. But you must pardon me; I am an old man and have been ill, very ill. And—Irkutsk, you say. I have never been in Irkutsk."

"Then I congratulate you," said the other bitterly. "Irkutsk has no pleasant memories for a political person."

"Ha—what is that? a political—you are not—are you that Makofski, that officer, who was imprisoned." He stopped as if at a loss.

"That Fernand Makofski who was arrested and condemned as a revolutionist soon after the assassination of the czar, and who was as innocent of participation in that deed as yourself, sir? Yes, I am that man."

Instantly Miles La Croix' hand was extended.

"You are very welcome here, sir," he said with a cordiality that surprised Moina. And then for the first time he seemed to remember her.

"Allow me to present my daughter," he said graciously. "She is as much a friend to the good cause as I am myself. You can speak freely before her, sir. Pray be seated, and tell us how you chance to be in America."

The visitor seated himself, and after seeming to hesitate a moment said:

"I will be perfectly frank with you, sir. Of course, you must know that I am a refugee."

"What! you have escaped?"

"Yes, so I dared not present myself here," he went on; "rather, I had not the right to do it, until I had taken time to assure myself that I had not been followed. I did not care to bring a spy to your door."

"And," said La Croix, "do I understand that you have no mission here?"

"None at present. What I may or may not do, after a time, depends upon my success baffling my pursuers."

"Is your emeny so dangerous that he is more acute than you, or I, or others?"

"He! Ah, if it were only a he. But the hunter is a woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes. A Russian lady of rank, skillful, dangerous, with any number of spies and agents at her command. I am not the only prey she seeks. She has another mission."

"Do you know her name?"

"Unfortunately, no. But I expect to learn it."

"And have you chosen your new place of abode?"

"Alas, no! I dread to think of it. After years of isolation, to go into voluntary exile seems hard; doubly so since I have found a congenial companion—a comrade."

"Well said; a comrade." He got up and locked the door. "Draw your chair nearer," he continued, resuming his own. "Let me tell you something of our work here, and then let me make you a proposition."

"With my all my heart," said Fernand Makofski.

An hour later La Croix rang for Margot and when she appeared he sent for Moina.

"My daugther," he said, "you have heard Captain Makofski's story, and you know that for the present his safety lies in seclusion. The captain is one of us. I cannot permit him to go among strangers where, perhaps, there may be spies in the next room. He has consented, for a time at least, to make his retreat with us. We have room and to spare. You will see that the apartment next to mine is made ready for him. He will come to us at once."

"Yes, papa." Moina's face gave no sign of her inward perturbations, her surprise and dismay.

"Captain Makofski need not be entirely secluded here. He is something of an artist, and to the world in general will pass as my pupil. As for our few intimate friends,

he can trust them as us. In naming him before the servants, you are to call him Captain Fernand. The name Makofski will only be used among ourselves."

"I understand."

Miles La Croix smiled upon her as she went out. He looked eager and animated. His guest filled all his thoughts. He had not seemed so genial in many days.

"One thing occurs to me," he said thoughtfully, and scanning the captain slowly from head to foot. "You are rather a striking personage. Would it not be well for you to assume—ah—some sort of disguise, at least to shave or change the fashion of your beard."

Captain Makofski strode to the door and locked it, in his turn.

"I am going to burn my last bridge," he said, coming back and standing opposite his host. "I am going to put myself absolutely at your mercy. I owe you that confidence in return for your kindness. I am already disguised. You have not asked for proofs of my sojourn in Siberia, but I offer them to you. See!"

He put his hand up and removed first the thick beard and mustache, and then the wig of red-brown hair.

Miles La Croix gazed into a fine, firm featured face, clean-shaven, handsome and strong. On one side of the head, the hair was thick and little more than an inch long; on the opposite side there was just an infinitesimal growth of down.

"In Siberia," said the captain, with bitterness in face and voice, "they make us hideous as well as wretched; they shave our heads on one side. You see Fernand Makofski is not likely to show his true self, until this mark of infamy has had time to erase itself."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A DETECTIVE "PRICE"

While Captain Fernand Makofski was bowing before the La Croix, Madeline Payne tapped lightly at the door of Princess Sacha's salon and was promptly admitted by the maid.

"Madam is breakfasting in her dressing-room," said the woman. "If mademoiselle will please to enter, and be seated—" and she wheeled an easy-chair toward the fire-place where a light wood flame was glowing.

"A fire!" exclaimed Madeline smilingly, "and on such a morning as this." She drew the chair further from the blaze and seated herself. "Do not trouble madam," she said sarcastically. "Let her finish her breakfast without interruption. I am not in haste."

Sacha appeared in her floating morning robe of white and gold, and as the two stood together exchanging greetings, they framed a lovely picture, a contrast to delight the eye of a colorist: the one petite and brunette, the other fair and stately.

In spite of her faith in Roger Drexel, and in his reasons, known and unknown, for subjecting Sacha Orloff to surveillance, Madeline felt herself intuitively and strangely drawn toward the little Russian.

Two beautiful women, royally clad, luxuriously surrounded, both rich, both free and the world before them: Something like this flashed through Madeline's mind as, turning to resume her seat, she caught the reflection of their figures in a long mirror, "and yet—" she said to herself, "we are both spies!"

When Roger Drexel presented himself before the Princess Sacha, he found her alone and evidently awaiting his coming. She was dressed for her drive with Madeline, her cheeks were flushed, her eyes glowing with excitement.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, springing up as he appeared beneath the silken portiere, and coming swiftly toward him. "Oh, my friend, so, at last you condescend to appear in person! Something must have happened, something important, else I should have received another of those brief notes you chose to call reports. Do you know I more than half believe you have purposely avoided coming here?"

"Let me say," he remarked, "that I think I have found a clue. I hope to succeed."

"Ah! Tell me—" she began.

"Madam, you must be perfectly frank with me. You said at our first meeting that you desired the services of one who was, in no sense of the word, a revolutionist."

She started and paled, but her voice was calm and self-controlled.

"True, I gave my reasons," she said.

"And very plausible ones they were. Now hear what I have discovered. And, if you wish me to continue in your service, be quite frank. It is necessary. First—at the time of his disappearance from Russia and Europe, Basil Petralowski was an active nihilist. Do not take the trouble to contradict me; I have left no room for doubt on this point. Now let me repeat a former question, parried by you when asked. Have you reason to suspect that he was 'removed' by private influence?"

She was very pale now, but her eyes flashed back upon his.

"Reasons? we do not always need reasons, we women. We have intuitions, instincts."

"Then you do not think he was spirited away, for political causes, by the emissaries of the czar?"

"I will tell you what I think," she said, with sudden fierce frankness. The means may have been public, the secret police perhaps; the end sought was private vengeance."

"Ah, now we are getting on. Continue to be frank, madam. To come to America, as you wished to come, unchallenged, unquestioned, you needed a pretext. I will not ask if, previous to the disappearance of this man, you took any part in Russian political affairs. I simply ask if, when you determined to come to America, you did not decide to serve as the agent, perhaps, of the government?"

She sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing. "Monsieur, this is too much! This is insolence!"

He arose also. "As you will," he said coldly. "At least you shall understand me. I know whereof I speak. I am prepared to support my statements. Such knowledge as I possess is certain. You are here on a mission totally unconnected with the search of Basil Petralowski. But I will be quite frank with you. Although sure of this much, I do not know whether you are acting with the revolutionists or for the Russian government."

"Ah!" and sank back into her seat again. "Then undoubetdly you intend to make yourself sure on that point."

"Madam, I expect to get all further information I require from you."

"From me! You are bold!"

"Let us have done with this."

He in turn resumed his seat.

"I am not hunting you, madam. I am not anxious as to your mission, except in so far as it may enable you to do me a service for that which I intend to render you.

First, I am to find for you Basil Petralowski, or the truth concerning him."

"And then—?"

"I shall ask a service of you. I ask now for your promise. When my part is done and you know all, I shall ask you to do this thing for me. Do you agree?"

"Bring Mr. Basil Petralowski, if he is alive, or the whole truth as to his fate if he is dead, and I promise, I swear, to render you any service that is within my power; here is my hand."

"You will not see me again until my task is done, and I am come to claim your reward. One thing makes my progress difficult," he said.

"What thing?"

"The lack of any picture by which to identify."

"Ah, how I wish I had one, even the poorest;" her face had softened, and there were tears in her voice.

As he emerged from the apartments of Princess Sacha and walked slowly down the corridor, he passed an open door, and, an instant later, heard a voice close behind him, a voice he recognized at once.

"Stop, sir."

He turned quickly and confronted Madeline. There was no shadow of recognition upon either face, only a slight surprise on his.

"Pardon me, sir; this paper fell from your pocket, I think."

She thrust a small, folded paper into his hand and turned quickly away.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BEGINNING TO BURN

Madeline's sudden appearance in the corridor was a surprise to Drexel; but he knew instinctively that it had a meaning. Not a sign of recognition had passed between them; and thrusting the note into his pocket, he went on and entered the smoking-room, meaning to wait there, according to his original intention, until Madeline and Princess Sacha had left upon their drive. Seating himself carelessly, and a little aloof from the other loungers, he took the little note from his pocket and read it.

"I have discovered this morning," it said, "that the writer of the two letters of warning sent to Mr. Lord, was in all likelihood, Madam La Princess. I have found in her waste basket the blotter used when the first of the letters was written. Both blotter and letters are at your service."

That was all, and Roger Drexel twisted it into a lighter and going to the little bronze lamp always alight for the use of smokers, he coolly thrust it into the tiny flame, lighted a cigar with it, and watched it burn into ashes in his fingers.

"Bravo!" he said to himself, as he resumed his seat. "Miss Payne is a woman in a thousand. We are beginning to burn."

Half an hour later, he saw, through the open window, the departure of Madeline and the princess, both look-

ing as high-bred, beautiful and care-free as if no such word as anxiety were known to their vocabulary. Ten minutes more and he was again applying for admittance at the Princess Sacha's door.

"I wish to see madam, the Princess Orloff," he said to the maid who opened it.

"Madam, the princess, has gone out, monsieur."

"Not the Princess Orloff, the mother of madam?"

"Oh, no!" There was a note of surprise in the maid's answer. "Enter, monsieur; I will see if madam, the princess will receive you."

"Say to her," he said easily, "that it is simply to leave a message forgotten before. I will not detain her."

There was hardly a moment of waiting, and the elder Princess Orloff, entered the room. She was very pale and seemed agitated. He thought that she even looked more wan and pale than when he had seen her first. Drexel advanced to meet her and drew toward her an easy-chair with a respectful deference quite unlike his cold and dignified bearing in the presence of the Princess Sacha. She sank into the proffered seat and looked anxiously into his face.

"You wished to speak with me, monsieur?" she said deprecatingly.

"Yes, madam. And what I have to say need not agitate you. I am seeking to serve you. Madam, I wish to be perfectly frank with you. You know the nature of my business with the Princess Sacha Orloff?"

"Yes." She was too much agitated to display any surprise that he spoke thus of one who was recognized as her daughter, and he noted this.

"Then you must know that in my capacity as detective, I must study closely and am likely to discover many things."

"Yes," she whispered again.

"Madam, I beg of you not to be startled or alarmed. I see that you are anxious, and not strange. Believe me, my sympathy is with you. I am your friend and trying to serve you." He was speaking slowly and gently.

"But I know, I surmised from the first, that you are not the mother of the Princess Sacha; that you are, in fact, that kind foster-mother of whom she has spoken so gratefully, so tenderly. You are—the mother of Basil Petralowski!"

She grew still paler. She was pitifully agitated. Her lips moved mechanically but no sound came from them.

"I can understand your anxiety," he went on, still very gently, "and cannot question your methods. In assuming the position of the mother of the Princess Sacha Orloff, you have done her a service, and made her position here, as well as your own, secure beyond question. I ask your help, for such aid as you can perhaps give in your own service."

"Ah," she sighed, "I do not understand."

"But you shall. In my search for your son, I am hampered by the lack of any picture of him that might so readily lead to his identification. I know a mother's heart, and I have wondered if—if it might not be that, out of your loss and wreck, you had preserved some likeness, the only one perhaps, hoarding it lest you be bereft of it, keeping the fact of its possession a secret, maybe, even from the princess, who might have had the courage to give it up, if she thought it necessary to our success."

He paused. She had both her hands to her face and was sobbing wildly.

He got up and walked about the room, giving her time to recover herself. When the sobbing became less violent he came back and stood by her side.

"I do not wish to take it from you," he said softly.

"If you will let me see it, just for a moment I ask no more. My memory is good, and I will keep your secret. You must say nothing of my return to the princess and then I need not explain to her why I came. One sight of the picture, remember, may help me." He hesitated and almost faltered over these words—"may help—to find—your son."

She lifted her tear-stained face. "You are very good. And—I could not give it up. It was all that I had left of him, my only boy. And if Sacha had known—"

"I understand. You could not have possessed it alone. But now time passes. Show me the picture, dear madame, and trust me. Can you trust your maid as well?"

"Jeane is devoted to me," she said rising and going slowly toward a curtained door. Then, turning back with piteously quivering lips: "You will not take it from me?"

"No; I swear it."

She was gone but a moment, but in that moment her manner had changed. She seemed eager and excited now. Tears shone in her eyes.

"We must be quick," she whispered. "If she should come back—she must not see it. It would never be all mine again and—it is mine by right. I am his mother."

She held a velvet case in her hands. This she opened with a reverent, tender touch, and after one long pathetic look, she held it out to him with quivering lips.

"That is Basil," she said softly.

He took it from her hand and bent over it. The pictured face was a handsome one, with its spirited poise of head, its regular features, smooth but for a slight mustache; its close cropped, curling hair, and fine dark eyes. It was a long minute before Drexel removed his gaze and lifted his head. And then he did not meet her questioning gaze.

He closed the case with a touch almost as reverent as her own, and put it back into her hand. He took her hands in his. "Dear madame, I hope to be able to bring you some news soon, I trust it may—" He broke off abruptly and turned his eyes away. "I must not be here when the princess returns," he said hurriedly. "And you—you are agitated. You must have time to compose your self. This meeting is our secret, madame. I thank you very much for your trust in me. You shall find that it has not been misplaced." When he was outside he said to himself: "If I had stayed there a moment longer I should have blundered—have shown my feelings too plainly. Poor woman! Poor mother! and she has only helped me, shown me the way, to break her poor, frail heart."

CHAPTER XL

A LITTLE DETECTIVE

'Hullo!"

"'Lo!"

The salutation was cheerily uttered, and evidently intended to be ingratiating. The reply was indifferent, not to say sullen. The first speaker stood with hands in pockets, and shabby hat cocked sideways—the very picture of a street Arab—upon the dirty pavement directly before the second, who sat upon the door-step at the shabby entrance of a tumble-down, frame tenement house.

"Yes."

"D-ye ever see a tall man with big whiskers and a red nose round here?"

"No; why?"

"'Cause, he got me to do a job for him and he paid me well, and said he'd want me again to-day and he'd meet me at the corner yonder; but he warn't there. He told me to kind 'o hang round here; he might need me more than once, and he's good pay."

The next day as the boy sat as before alone upon the step, a blithe voice hailed him.

"Hullo. Been sittin' there ever since."

"No." This time the visitor seated himself at once. "Tell yer what," he began, "I was just in luck yesterday. Hadn't left yer five minits hardly before I found my man."

"Did ye?" with interest.

"You bet, and I've done another good bit of payin' work. That's the kind of biz for me; no more sellin' newspapers. No more carryin' parcels, for Johnny Deegan, that's my name; now what's yourn?"

"Hans," said the other; "Hans Kressler." Then he started and looked involuntarily over his shoulder. Johnny Deegan seeming not to have heard, took from his pocket a small paper containing some highly colored, strongly flavored sweets and proffered it to Hans.

"It's my treat," he explained. "When a feller gets a good job like that, he can afford a little blow-out."

"Did you earn much," asked Hans, with his mouth full of candy.

"Huh!" Johnny jingled some coins in his pocket, and then produced a handful of change.

"Feast yer eyes on that," he said; "and it ain't all neither. An' what's more there's a show for a long job, good pay and grub along with it. Tain't sure, but the cove said he might need two or three smart boys, and for me to be around handy in case he wanted me." He proffered the candy once more, and abruptly changed the subject. His quick eye had noticed the gleam in the face of Hans at the mention of "pay and grub."

"You see," he said—when two or three games of marbles had been played and all the candy eaten—"ye see, I ain't like you, I ain't got no fambly to bother about, and kin do as I like. I've found a good place to bunk, and as long's my chink holds out, I kin eat where I like. Is yer granny good to yer?"

"Sometimes," said Hans gloomily.

As the week wore away, Hans on the door-step found himself looking more and more anxiously for the coming of Johnny Deegan.

For a few days Johnny was full of cordiality and liberal with his marbles and sweets.

One day Johnny arrived earlier than usual, seeming much elated.

"Well," he said jauntily, "we'll have one more game for luck. I'm going to change my hotel to-morrer. I've got the job, and it's a good one, I tell ye."

"What are you going to do?" faltered Hans.

Johnny leered at him, knowingly. "Look here, sonny," he said; "ye mustn't arsk questions. Tain't no common biz, let me tell you. Yer a good sort o' chap, and I'd like to tell yer jest to see yer eyes bung out. But no; ye'd tell yer gran. 'Twouldn't do; besides, I haven't got time. I'll play ye jest one game, and then I'm off. I've got to find another feller to work with me, and I don't know jest where ter get the one I want."

Hans looked up, about, and behind himself, and then came close to Johnny.

"Hush," he said; "don't let gran hear you. How would I do?"

"Look here," said Johnny seriously, "ain't you joking?"

"No; I mean it—every word."

"But this ain't no common work, I tell ye. I like ye first-rate, if ye do look mighty babyish a settin' on them old door-steps, an' I'm sorry fer ye, but—" here he suddenly struck his hands together as if startled by some new thought.

"No, Hans; tain't no use. I can't do it. And I'll tell you why: I hadn't orter, but I want ye to know why I had to go back on yer. Only ye must promise hope to die, ye won't never breathe it."

"I promise," whispered Hans eagerly; "Hope to die if I do."

"Hans did you ever hear of the 'Banded Brothers?'"

"Do you mean the knights?"

"Naw; them's men, growed up. The Banded Brothers is all boys like me, and we're bound to help each

other, and to fight our oppressors and avenge one another's wrongs, jest the same as the knights does. And we're down on the money-kings and we sympathizes with the strikers, an' help 'em all we can. Well, Hans, I'm one of the Banded Brothers, an' it's my duty to help my brothers. If you was one of us 'twould be all right. I wish you could join us. But then there's your gran. 'Twouldn't do. An' don't ye see, Hans, I ort to go and give this nice fat job I've found, fer me and another boy, to one of the Banded Brothers?"

Wiser and older heads than that of Hans have been turned by the sophistry of the tempter. Hans was quivering with excitement. His eager little face was thrust up close to Johnny's, the red dyeing his sallow cheeks.

"Don't yer never tell," he whispered hastily. "You won't, will you?"

"Me! The Banded Brothers never peaches, Hans."

"Well, then I'm a knight."

Johnny started back, assuming a dramatic attitude.

"I am. My uncle, gran's only boy, got killed in one of the big strikes, and she's hated the bloated austeracy ever since, and taught me to. She won't let me work for them, nor be helped by them. We're socialists."

"Phew."

"And I've done—well, I guess if I told you what I'd done, you'd say I was fit to be a Banded Brother."

"Done! you? Such a little feller! You couldn't do much."

"That's it. It's just because I'm little that I could help. A man couldn't have done what I did. You couldn't have done it."

"Oh, come now; what're you givin' us!"

"It's true. You're too big. I'm a knight, I am, I tell you. Say you'll take me! Say you will."

"Look a-here, sonny," said Johnny, with the air of one being impressed against his better judgment, "I'm going to tell you the square truth, now. And if ye ever give me away I'll come down on ye with the hull gang of Banded Brothers, and we'll jest about clean ye out. Hear?"

"Oh, I won't tell; I won't!"

"This is jest how it stands. If I say the word you git the job. My boss, he says to me like this: 'Johnny, you ought to know another boy of your own sort, and if you do I want you to bring him to me. I'll pay you alike and you'll sleep and work together'—see?"

"Oh, yes. Yes!"

"Now, here's the sticker. You can't imagine what you'd have to do. Come closer; let me whisper. Don't see any cops around, do ye?"

Hans jumped up the step and looked scared.

"Pshaw," said Johnny, "you're too nervous."

"Listen, my first job I had to watch a house all day 'thout any dinner. An' my next, I had to follow a feller half over town and not let him see me nor 'spect me, nother. An' my boss said"—here he put his mouth close to Hans' ear—"he said we might have to get into somebody's house, and not be caught at it. There!"

Johnny drew back and seemed waiting for his effect. Much to his apparent surprise, Hans laughed; his face lighted up, he looked proud and confident.

"Why," he said with fine scorn, "that's nothing. I can do that too, slick. I have done it for the knights. That's why they made me one."

An hour later Johnny Deegan and the tall man with the blonde beard were closeted together in the little humble room which Johnny had occupied more or less since he had ceased to be a boot-black.

"I've got him," said the boy—"got him dead to rights! I said everything to him that you told me to, and he jest tumbled." And Johnny dramatized, for the benefit of his patron, the scene between himself and little Hans. "It 'pears," he said in conclusion, "that his granny is always a twittin' him with bein' good-for-nothin', and has been a trainin' him to be a regular roarin' striker and annikrist. And Hans says that sometimes she says things that makes him think that she ain't his real granny anyhow. He's awful afraid of her, and the old man too. But he's been achin' to run away, this ever so long."

"You have done well, Johnny," said his patron. "You will bring the boy here to-night, and to-morrow I will provide you with quarters in another part of the city. We can keep the boy quiet for awhile through his fear of being found by his grandmother, or the old Jew."

"Why, ain't you goin' to put us on a job?" queried Johnny.

"My boy, you have already done a very good job. And I am going to trust you now with a great secret. I am going to make a little detective of you. You said, you know, that you wanted to be a detective."

"Gosh!" cried the delighted boy.

"And your first 'job' will be to take good care of this boy Hans for me; to make him attached to you, and not let him out of your sight until further orders. If you succeed in this you will go into regular service. You shall never black another boot."

Johnny fairly danced with delight.

"Tell me what to do," he cried. "I'll do it; you bet I'll do it."

CHAPTER XLI

HOSMER AT WORK

Number 29 Short Street was indeed an humble abode—a cottage, small and old, but neat and orderly without and within. Kenneth Hosmer was dressed like a workingman out for a holiday, clean and trim. He touched his hat, as he met the woman's inquiring gaze, and his frank, handsome face spoke loudly in his favor.

"Is your husband at home, madam?" he asked.

She gave him a long, slow look, before she answered.

"No, sir; he ain't at home just now, but he'll be here soon. Did you want to see him particular?" There was a note of anxiety in her voice—a question in her tired, anxious eyes.

"I—well, not very particular. I had promised to come and see him, and as I had time to-day—but of course I can come again." He made a movement as if to turn away.

"Excuse me," she said hastily; "won't you please tell me your name?"

"Yes'm, certainly." He gave the name by which he had introduced himself to Joseph Parker, and her countenance changed instantly.

It was as if she felt relief at his coming.

He saw it and it caused him to wonder.

"Won't you come in, sir?"—she swung the door wide. "It's high time that Joseph was here." I feel anxious when he's out long, now. He's got something on his

mind, and—I may as well out with it; like as not you know of it anyhow—Joseph drinks a bit sometimes. Oh!" seeing his look of surprise, "not to spree, or the like of that, but when he's worried, then he takes a glass and it makes him—queer."

She stopped and continued to gaze at him wistfully. The young masquerader was actually embarrassed.

"I'm very sorry," he said, and there was genuine sympathy in his voice. He did not dream what a wholesome, confidence-winning fellow he looked in his tidy workman's clothes. Suddenly she drew her chair closer to him and lowered her voice.

"I'm going to be over bold, sir," she said hurriedly. "But you look kind and—and honest." Kenneth winced. "I'm going to ask you not to drink with Joseph to-day if he asks you, and to keep him from it if you can. And there's something else: We've seen hard times, Joseph and me. He belonged to the union and then left it. Everything went against us, and about a year ago he joined again. But, somehow, he's out of conceit with the unions, and to-day he has been declaring that he would quit the union if we all starved in a batch."

"Has anything happened to make him dissatisfied again?" asked Kenneth with sudden interest. "Pardon me, but your husband has told me something of his experience with the unions."

"Well, I suppose there must something struck him wrong. You see he reads the newspapers a good deal, and always looks up everything about strikes and boycotts and the like. And sometimes he rages fit to scare you, about some of their foolishness, as he calls it. Yesterday he was reading the 'Morning Echo,' and all at once down goes the paper, and up jumps Joseph. He gives the paper a kick out of the way and begins to walk up and down, and he did look enough to scare a

"WON'T YOU COME IN, SIR."—Moina, p. 249.

person. Then out he breaks, a-swearing and calling somebody hounds and bloody villains and such like. And then he roars out that he has done with the unions for good and all; starve or no starve he'll not work for them any more. It was awful."

"Did you find out what was in the paper that roused him so?"

"No, and that's the curious part of it. I took up the paper after he was gone, for I couldn't get a word out of him, and I looked it all over. But I could'nt find aynthing about strikes or unions or such!"

"I would like to see that paper."

"You can. He ain't never looked at it since, and I put it away against he might want it. Here it is." And she took from a high shelf a copy of the "Morning Echo" and put it in his hand. "Do you remember how the paper was folded when he threw it down?"

"Just as it is now. He had only begun to read and hadn't got over the first page."

Kenneth unfolded the paper and, at almost the first glance, his eye rested on the following startling head-line:

MURDER IN THE HOUSE OF A MILLIONAIRE. STABBED IN HIS BED

Hosmer started and involuntarily lowered the paper, then lifted it again, and forced himself to scan the entire page. Beyond its long and sensational account of the murder of poor Harvey, there was absolutely nothing to rouse the ire, or even interest, in the breast of a man like Parker; and there was not even a paragraph concerning unions, strikes, or "such like," as Mrs. Parker would have said. A strange thought was taking shape in Kenneth's mind as he continued to feign interest in a further scrutiny of the paper.

"What do you think it was?" she asked wistfully.

"I can't tell; perhaps he happened to think of something just then. It might not have been the paper."

"Oh, I'm sure it was. He had been good-natured enough before that, and then his words. And as quick as he got a dram, which was soon, he began to say more, and he did say such things about the unions! That's why I asked you not to drink with him." Mrs. Parker was getting incoherent. She had quite lost sight of the fact that he was a stranger. "And, sir, don't say anything against the unions to him now. Don't advise him to quit it. What would become of us? and nothing laid by. Oh, sir, it's hard. And Joseph was always a good man, a good father to the children. If he should take to drink—"

There was a sound on the step outside. She flung him a last appealing glance as she hastened to replace the paper, and Kenneth had just time to say under his breath:

"Trust me, ma'am. I try my best for you."

And then the door swung open and Joseph Parker was before them. It was evident from his manner, as well as from the look his wife gave him, that he had repeated his dram. He was not so despondent as when he went away, but quite as full of wrath; and at just that stage of intoxication when talking is a delight and caution is thrown to the winds.

He would not stay inside. They could talk better out of doors, he said. And when he had got Hosmer fairly outside he added: "Taint best to talk too much afore the women. It makes them want to argify."

Hosmer smiled and then started as he remembered that he had dropped his dialect while talking with Mrs. Parker. "It's well he got me out before I had a chance to go on in that strain," he thought. "It might have surprised my friend Joseph, mellow though he certainly is."

They had not gone far—Hosmer keeping purposely silent—before Parker put a brawny hand upon his shoulder. "Well, lad," he said, "it's hoping you've thought better of things since those anarchists fellers did yer sich a bad turn. You ain't so fond of the s'cieties, eh!"

"Oh, I don't know. Them fellers were a couple of Huns, ye know—beastly foreigners. Ye don't spose they were union men, do you?"

"Umph! I guess ye kin find plenty of foreigners in the unions nowadays."

"But they would be turned out if they was caught doing a thing like that, wouldn't they? Come, now, don't be too hard on the unions."

"Hard!" Joseph ground out an oath between his teeth. "If I had a son and I had to choose between letting him join one of these ere new societies and lettin' him go right off and turn thief and burglar, a burglar he'd be. He'd be his own boss, and be doing his own dirty work then, not somebody else's."

"Talking about burglars," broke in Kenneth, seizing the opportunity thus offered him, "did ye hear about that house-breaking business up on Fifth Avenue? some rich banker's, I believe. Broke in an' killed one of the servants. Killed him in his bed."

Instantly the face of the man beside him became livid. His hands clinched and then flung outwards in a violent gesture.

"Heard it," he cried. "Have I heard it? Ain't I all the time hearin' it? Can't I fairly see it?"

They were walking down a secluded street, chosen by Kenneth to avoid the saloons. Parker after getting away from his home had seemed not to care or know which way they went.

"Murdered in his bed was he?" went on Joseph Parker. "Killed in his sleep. The poor fellow. Oh, can't

I see the miserable fellow at his work—look here: He goes around through the alleys and up to the back basement door. It is a glass door so he cuts a pane—no I forgot—there are two, and they get in over the transom first, another opens the door. Then through the little hall, up the big square stairs, creep, creep, turn, turn. Then straight on to the old man's door, knife in one hand, lantern in t'other. Oh, what a house! It looked—" He turned in the eagerness of his narrative, and then he stopped short, and the hot blood flowed into his face.

"Well," said his companion, "go on. Ye tell it like—like ye had seen it yourself."

"Me? How should I see it?" angrily. "Don't I read the newspapers? aint it all there?"

"Of course, of course it is. That's jest my jokin'. But come now, honest Injun, be you really down on the societies?"

"I'm down on 'em," said Parker violently. "I'm down on 'em so hard that I wont never darken their doors agin—not if they boycott me a hundred times over—not if they drive me out of the country—not if they kill me."

"My dear man—" Hosmer's manner was very winning—at once confiding and confidence-inviting—"it would be worth something to be as well posted as you. I know a fellow you ought to talk to. You make me think of him. He's down on the socialists, now I tell you. Hates 'em and he'll work agin 'em too; yes, sir. A few such fellows as him and you might do something toward exposin' these fellers if they're using the societies ter cloak their meanness. That's the way I'd take ter get even if the old unions went back on me."

"'Umph," grunted Parker; but it was plain that he was caught by the idea. "'Tain't so easy."

"Wait till you've seen my man. Fer instance, ye know those newspaper fellers they're allus on the look for some-

thing spicy, and they're most on 'em down on the anarchists and that lot. Now s'pose two or three honest fellers, that know what they're talkin' about, jest up and tell what they can about the crooked doin's of the gang—no names, mind. The newspapers wouldn't want to print no names, since that wouldn't do no good and might do hurt. The story 'll sell the papers without any names. It would help you to get even with the old unions, and it might be a warnin' to some others like me, say. You've about turned me against the whole boodle of 'em."

Parker had linked his hand within his companion's arm. He drew closer to him.

"Look here," he said impressively, "if I should tell what I could tell—you've no idea of it—it 'u'd make as big a stir as—as that murder."

He spoke with an odd mixture of hesitation and bravado. You've no idea," he repeated musingly.

"It might be a good thing for you," suggested Hosmer. "It would make friends of all the men that are agin' the unions and the like. An' you know there's a lot of rich men turnin' agin' them—rich men. Some of 'em are bandin' themselves together and swearin' not to hire any more union men. Gosh, Parker, I wish you could hear that feller talk that I spoke of; he could advise ye. I'm yer friend, ofcourse, and I'll do anything in the world for ye. I'll stand by ye whatever comes, and I'll share what little I've got with ye when ye want it. But that man's smart. I wish ye'd tell him yer hull story."

Joseph was captured. "If I tell my affairs to any man," he said, "it will be to you. I hain't known ye long, but I know ye're square. Didn't I see ye stand up 'longside that policeman? I don't know as I mind havin' ye know all about it."

They moved along slowly and in silence for a few paces. Hosmer's conscience was pricking him sorely. What was this man about to tell him? After, would it be of any real service to Drexel? And if not—well, at any rate he would not throw Parker over. He would not let his family want.

He did not know all of Drexel's reasons for seeking to fathom the secret of Parker's quarrel with the union. He knew that his friend was reaching out in many directions for clues, but to what end? More than once he had asked himself this question, while never once doubting Drexel.

"Say," said Joseph, "let's go somewhere and get something to drink."

Again that troublesome conscience smote Hosmer. He thought of Mrs. Parker and his promise to her. Then he glanced sideways at Joseph. He had to but turn about, to go with him into the nearest saloon, find a quiet corner where talk would be uninterrupted, and the secret would be his and Drexel's. Would the end justify the means? Joseph halted waiting his answer.

"Come," he said, and turned short around. "I'll make it up to her," he said to himself, "and whatever comes of it, I will see him through." A moment later they were entering the saloon together.

CHAPTER XLII

I BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND

Poor Harvey, whose life had been sacrificed to his master, was buried with all honor from the house where he has met his death. Buried like a son rather than a servant, and followed to the grave by Madeline and Dr. Vaughan; by Mrs. Ralston, the Lords and the Fallingsbees.

Mr. Lord did not come to the city. When the doctor returned to him, on the evening that followed the awful discovery, he found him worse—suffering so much pain that any thought of movement or change was simply out of the question. To keep the horrible news from him was impossible, and when he had been told, he grieved and raged himself into a fever.

"Poor Harvey!" the sick man said, between groans of pain. "Poor, honest, faithful fellow! A martyr in my stead. I shall never forgive myself for putting him in that cursed room. Tell Fallingsbee to do everything as if it were for myself. It ought to have been myself."

Some days later another paragraph made its appearance.

"Mr. Elias Lord, the banker whose palatial Fifth Avenue residence was the scene of the late ghastly murder, has returned to the city. He went to the country for the benefit of his health, but he now declares himself determined to remain here until the mystery surrounding the strange taking-off of his footman is cleared up. He believes that he understands the motive for the

crime, and has a clue which will lead to the detection of its perpetrators."

In both these paragraphs the initiated would doubtless trace the hand of Roger Drexel, alias Hurst.

"This is how they will reason," he said to Madeline. "Seeing Mr. Lord going and coming about his usual business, they will believe that he is thoroughly and systematically guarded. They will fancy any number of private detectives hunting them down. The fact that we keep our own counsel, will alarm them more than any amount of ventilation would have done. I think I can predict with tolerable certainty that, for a time, Mr. Lord may rest unmolested. They will not give up but they will postpone—they will strive to meet cunning with cunning." In this, as we know, Drexel judged rightly.

After the burial of Harvey and a final conference with the officers who were nominally in charge of the investigation, Drexel sought another interview with Madeline. It was long, and at its close he bade her adieu as if for an indefinite absence. "Our meetings must be few hereafter," he said; "when it is necessary for us to see each other, it will have to be after dark, and wherever the circumstances of the case suggests."

Previous to the date of his illness, Miles La Croix had held his most secret councils in the small apartment where we last saw Crashaw, Passauf, and Dr. Lugas together. Usually these councils had been limited to three or four, for at first Lugas was not with them and, sometimes, Passauf was absent, "for the good of the cause." Sometimes Savareis was present with them, but always by request, or permission. And now and then, a little, crooked, hideous man, with hands like talons and nose like a beak, sat in their circle. His presence was always prepared for in advance, and when

he came Savareis was invariably absent. But now a change was made; the small inner room behind the studio in La Croix' house was fixed upon as the permanent rendezvous.

This change had taken place some days before Miles La Croix' nocturnal ramble on the eve of poor Harvey's death; and Captain Fernand Makofski had been three days an inmate of the house, and had been making rapid strides into the good graces of both host and hostess, when the time for another meeting in the little room behind the studio came around. It was, in fact, the evening of the day after Harvey's burial.

The arrival of Captain Makofski had seemed, at first, like another blow dealt her by an adverse fate. She was shocked at her father's hasty act of hospitality, and dreaded the constant presence of a stranger among them. And then the foreign refugee was installed in the room next that of her father's and thus placed in constant communication with him; she was reduced almost to despair.

To sit beside her father's bed as he fell asleep, sometimes holding his hand, and murmuring soothing words to him, had become a nightly habit. He seemed always restless now when left alone, and this hour beside his bed had come to be the only one, she mournfully said to herself, when her presence seemed really welcome to him. Sometimes the hour was late, but he who had once been so thoughtful of her comfort seemed not to observe this fact. He never told her nowadays not to wait up for him, as he had used to do upon going out, and he never manifested surprise or uttered a comment when, after parting with Crashaw and the others at nearly midnight, he found her waiting in his chamber or in the little studio opposite.

And how was this to continue, with this big Russian

captain separated from her father by but a thin partition—a single door? It was her father himself who settled the troublesome question. "I trust that you are not a too light sleeper," he said at the close of their first evening together, "and that you are not nervous. My daughter has been in the habit of sitting with me in my room after I have retired for the night. I do not go to sleep readily, since my late illness, and her presence seems to act as a sedative; her influence is good—is soothing. Usually we are very quiet, but sometimes, if I am especially restless, we talk a little. I trust we shall not disturb you. The walls, I know, are not thick."

Captain Fernand laughed lightly. "My kind friend," he said, "I am a heavy sleeper, and not easily wakened. If in any emergency you should see fit to call me in the night, I must beg of you to do it, without hesitation, and without thought of my nerves. Above all, call or knock loudly."

Moina was secretly well pleased. She had found that with her touch upon her father's hand as he fell asleep she seemed to gain an easy control over his dormant senses, and when he began to murmur, as he usually did when asleep, she could lead his thoughts, and seldom failed to draw from him any information that she wished concerning the events of the few hours previous. It was a strange, sad task that she had undertaken, and bitterly repugnant at times. But Moina La Croix was fast becoming a woman, and a woman with a heavy burden to bear—a desperate battle to fight. She was discovering within herself unknown, undreamed-of resources; she grew sometimes amazed at her own courage and fortitude.

Fernand Makofski was a man of tact, of intelligence, of wide general knowledge, and Miles La Croix found him a most congenial companion. Moina too, in spite of

her reluctance to receive him, her dread lest he prove one more obstacle in her path, was drawn toward him in spite of herself. With Miles La Croix he talked, when the lead was given him, of foreign affairs, of Russian politics and nihilistic methods. He had been a traveler and could relate much that was interesting to both father and daughter; all of which dated back several years, or before his arrest and exile. He had traveled in America in his youthful days, but of this country as it is, at present, he seemed quite ignorant. So matters went smoothly on until on the night of the meeting of the "committee," the captain found himself alone with Moina in the little drawing-room.

"Papa tells me," she said after some desultory conversation, "that you are aware of the reason of his absence, or rather of his seclusion to-night?"

"Yes, your father has honored me with his confidence, Miss La Croix. He does not quite look upon me as an outsider."

"I fear it might seem rather strange to you," she faltered. And then for a moment she was silent, trifling nervously with some dainty work which lay upon her lap. During the day Moina had taken a sudden, bold resolve. She had decided to trust this man, stranger though he was, who attracted her so strangely. He seemed so sympathetic, so chivalrous; she trusted him instinctively, and while wondering at herself. "He is not one of them yet," she thought, "and if he cannot help me, at least he will not betray me. And I will not go too far—not at first."

The silence was growing oppressive when she suddenly lifted her eyes to his face.

"Captain Makofski," she said, her face flushing and her voice a trifle unsteady, "will you answer a question, and will you overlook its strangeness?"

"By all means, Miss La Croix."

"You may have seen that I am singularly alone here," she hurried on. "When we came to this country several months ago, I had not a friend here; and the two or three pleasant acquaintances I have made, are now cut off from me. If I speak to you thus it is because there is no one else, and because I believe you to be a fitting judge. Captain Makofski, answer me frankly: do you find anything peculiar in my father's manner or in his words?"

"Really, Miss La Croix, my acquaintance with your father has been so short—"

"True," she broke in; "but you are a man of the world. You know men. Answer me frankly."

"First, permit me to ask, is your father not his usual self?"

"His usual self! Oh, heavens! If you could have known him a year, yes, six months ago, you would not need to ask that. Wait; let me tell you something of his life—what he was compared with what he is."

"One moment; pardon me. You have both told me that there are two or three others who came with you to this country—men who served the same cause that your father serves—men who knew him abroad."

"Knew him, yes, but only for a short time; less than a year in fact."

"But this change—do I understand that it is recent?"

"Yes. It was his sickness that changed him."

"Then may I ask how it is that these friends of yours do not see this change? Have they not—"

She interrupted him with a strange passionate gesture.

"Don't call those men my friends. Why should they notice this change in my father when it serves their purpose so well—when it has made of him just a tool fitted to their hands? Ah, my ill-starred father! Those men sitting there to-night, calling him their 'chief,' deferring

to him, and molding him to their will, are, I believe, his worst enemies. I believe that he is being made the scape-goat for their iniquitous schemes, and that some day disaster will come, and my father will be sacrificed, to shield them and cover their escape!"

If Moina had not been too much excited to notice the changes that flashed across the face of her companion as he listened, she would surely have wondered. First, was keen interest; then compassion; next a gleam of actual pleasure; and finally, a stern, roused look; and with this upon his features he rose and stood straight before her.

"Miss La Croix," he said in a low, grave voice, "you have done well in saying this much, and, having said it, I beg you to speak further. Tell me of your father before this change came. Tell me what you can of these men. Do not hesitate or fear to tell me. And I swear to you, if what you say or fear is true, if your father is being made a tool in designing hands, you shall find a friend in me, and a friend who is not quite helpless even here."

He extended his hand and she put her own within it; and then, sitting there face to face she told of her father's European experiences as a friend of the people, of his kindness, his humanity; of her own growing interest in the cause, as it appeared to be there. Of their high hopes upon coming to America, of how she had become disillusioned. She said nothing of the black-list, and her discoveries and suspicions; nothing of her long hours beside her father's dream-tormented couch, and their attendant revelations.

"Oh!" she sighed in conclusion; "what a difference! At least it seems so to me. Socialism in Europe—even nihilism in Russia—one need not blush to be identified with. But this—this Amercian socialism, American

anarchy—it is wickedness, it is infamy! Here are no starving and oppressed millions. Here is no exile, no Siberia, no cruel czar. Oh, the ingrates! They come from every land to this for shelter, for safety, for refuge from all manners of evil, and as soon as their beaten and starved bodies grow strong, they turn and smite the hand that shields them."

"Do you think—have you any reason to think, that your father, before his illness, had felt any of the dissatisfaction you have expressed?"

"He never spoke upon the subject, but his actions were eloquent to me, who could read him so well. I believe he found the provocation small, their methods odious. Every time he met with that committee, it seemed to me that his uneasiness became more apparent. He grew reserved and anxious; sometimes he had a really haunted look upon his face. He grew nervous and sleepless. Then came a night when an extra session was called. He came home late, and in the morning was sick with the fever."

"I see," said the captain. "I begin to understand."

CHAPTER XLIII

SLAVES OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

While Moina and the captain were arriving at a better understanding, Crashaw, Lugas and Passauf were assembled with Miles La Croix in the little room now devoted to the sole use of the "committee." The business of the meeting was soon disposed of, it being mutually agreed that for the time being all attempts to make of Elias Lord "a thrilling example to all bloated capitalists," must be abandoned; and that for the same reasons that rendered this cessation of hostilities advisable, there should be no attempt in a new direction for a week or two, at least. And then, after some letters had been read and duly commented upon, the formalities of the evening being at an end, Mr. La Croix calmly announced the presence in his house of a new inmate.

"The name of my friend Makofski may not be unknown to you," he said with much dignity. "He came upon me quite by surprise, and was of course, not aware of my connections with the 'committee,'" bowing gravely to the three. And then he briefly sketched, for their benefit, the history of Captain Makofski, as given more in detail by himself. "I hope," he concluded, "that after a time we may have him among us. He would make a most active and useful member. He has held high rank among the societies abroad, and his record"—bending a calm glance upon Dr. Lugas—"is above suspicion."

"All this," replied Lugas, quite unmoved by glance or implication, "is of course vouched for?"

"Assuredly; and in a manner not to be disputed."

"What I want to know," growled Crashaw, who was looking ill-pleased, "is how this—this Makofski—found you out so readily."

"That is easily explained," said the stately old man; "it was Mr. Shanlan who supplied him with my address."

At the mention of Shanlan the three men exchanged glances. "In that case," said Lugas, "I have no more to say."

"Oh, nor I," muttered Crashaw.

Passauf, as usual, said nothing.

"What do you think of La Croix' new acquaintance?" asked Crashaw of Lugas, when, having shaken off Passauf, they were walking homeward together.

"Before I express my opinion, I must see this Russian exile."

"Confusion! You know what I mean. Of course, La Croix has it in his power to make this interloper one of us if he choose."

"Of course," coolly.

"And what then?"

Lugas lowered his voice and thrust his hand through Crashaw's arm. "Do you know what I told you not long ago?" he began.

"About what?"

"About our success in maneuvering La Croix to our liking. I said that we should get on well enough so long as we encountered no strong opposition."

"Well!" impatiently.

"May we not find this very opposition in this stranger?"

"Do you think—"

"I think that, if she did but know it, even Miss La Croix, who has by no means a weak will of her own,

could make us a deal of trouble—and this man if he is what La Croix pictures him will soon fathom things; will discover his true condition."

"Well! get to the point!"

"The point is here: this being the situation may we not serve our own purpose but by making him one of us. He would be more than half likely to go with the majority."

"And if he should not?"

"If he would not," said Lugas significantly, "perhaps Tausig could show us a way out of the dilemma."

"That's a dangerous resort."

"Desperate diseases, you know. But another way has just occurred to me."

"'Umph! What way?"

"Did you note well an item of information kindly put forward by our 'venerable,' to the effect that this Captain Fernand Makofski was now menaced by a Russian spy, in the shape of a woman?"

Crashaw started. "Pshaw," he said, "I see what you're driving at. But I tell you, you may as well put that idea out of your head. That woman is not a Russian spy."

"In your opinion, that is. We happen to differ on the subject."

"Yes," snarled Crashaw, who was in one of his worst moods. "You differ because madame does not choose to receive you."

"Does madame receive you?" asked the impassible Lugas.

"No; but that is for politic reasons. I have my reliable messenger."

"Yes; in Savareis, who is mad in love with madame."

"What do I care for that; she is not in love with him."

"But you seem to forget; I have my messenger too.

Nor is that all. Madame will not receive me you say, but rest assured my friend, that when it suits me to be received by madame, I shall not be shut out."

Crashaw sneered and shrugged his shoulders. "Haven't we got a long way from our Russian captain," he asked.

"Not so very far; see now, if we find this Makofski in our way, an anonymous note to madame denounces him. It must not be traced to us of course. This gives us the opportunity we seek."

"Say, you seek."

"That I seek, then. If madame is true to us, then Makofski will be recommended to our protection; if she is, as I suspect, an emissary of the czar, he will be likely to fall into some sort of trouble--perhaps be altogether removed from our path."

"'Umph; very pretty. Look here Lugas; why do you suspect this woman of being an emissary? You are Russian as well as she."

"A Pole, my good sir."

"A fiddlestick. Call yourself as many Poles as you like to others. You're as much a Russian as madame; why may I not suspect you of being 'an emissary of the czar!'"

Nothing seemed to ruffle the composure of Mr. Lugas. "If I knew that madame hated the czar and his minions, as much as I hate them, I should know her for a nihilist," he said calmly. "As for madame, I doubt her; first, because she has in her veins the blood of her father, and next, because she was enriched and ennobled. Not born either rich or noble, she was taken to court and made much of, and—she is a woman. But enough of this; does Savareis keep you well informed?"

"Well enough."

"All the same when a man is in love with a woman, he is not to be relied upon. I think he is growing luke-

warm. But here we are at my rooms; will you come in?"

"Yes; you have just put me in mind of something. I'll go in and we'll talk it over."

When they were closeted together and a box of cigars had been placed before his guest, Lugas said: "Now for your idea. It concerns Savareis, I'll wager."

"Yes it concerns Savareis, and madame and others."

Madame the Princess Sacha Orloff sat in her charming little salon; the low luxurious chair was drawn close before the grate, where a brisk fire was glowing, glaring, and it was cheerless outside. She held a gorgeous fire-screen between her face and the glow of the coals and looked from behind it across the hearth, and into the face of a visitor who sat leaning toward her, his eyes fastened upon her beautiful but discontented countenance.

"It is good to see you alone," he said at length, seeing that she made no effort to break the silence; "shall you call Madame Petralowski as usual as soon as I have made known my business?"

"That depends," with a half smile. "Or no, not to-day, in consideration of the fact that madame is not well. She never is well when it rains. She has 'nerves.' I was beginning to have nerves myself when you came so opportunely."

"Was it opportune?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Anything is opportune which breaks the monotony of such a day as this. You said something about business, I think?"

"Yes." And now his face clouded. "Do you ever tire of all this?"

"Tire! I tire of such a delightful life? How can you think of it?"

"Oh, you can always mock; I wish I could understand you. As it is, I can only—"

"Hush." She put up a warning hand. "Something uncanny is in the air, I think. I am nervous, and cross; don't touch upon forbidden subjects. Sometimes I think you deserve to understand me better—that I will tell you something that will make me less a riddle to you. But there—not now; not to-day. Tell me your news—your business. Let us be as little personal as possible. What is it?"

"Briefly then, you are asked to pay a visit to the studio of Miles La Croix."

"I?" She threw back her head and frowned. "And why?"

"There is a stranger there; a Russian refugee. I think they want you to see him."

"Oh! have you seen him?"

"I have not had the honor. But it will not long be withheld. I too am commissioned to cultivate his acquaintance. I may even be sent back to reside under the same roof."

She uttered a short laugh. "Better have stayed when you were there."

"Yes; as well, at least. That was Crashaw. I went as you know, because I really pitied Miss La Croix, and wanted to be of use. And I left, as you know, because Crashaw commanded it."

"But why such haste? The man was still ill."

"Oh, yes. He was still ill, but no longer delirious. What, have I not told you of my ideas of Crashaw and his designs upon Miss La Croix?"

"Designs? No, do you mean that he—"

"Is in love with her? I hardly think Rufus Crashaw could love a woman, but she is an heiress. Don't misunderstand me. He does not pay court to her, but I be-

lieve he hopes to see the day when she will be driven to accept him. I don't know how he means to accomplish this, but I do believe that he will try. She is terribly isolated and friendless. Crashaw is deep."

"As a well. And why do you not stand champion to Miss La Croix?"

"You are unkind," he said with sorrowful dignity. "You know why I can be no more than a respectful, faithful friend to Miss La Croix. Beside, if I were to be anything more than courteous, Crashaw would withdraw me from the house altogether, and she would be quite cut off. Since the strange change in her father, her life must be dreary enough."

Her face softened and for a moment she turned it away. Then: "Tell me about this Russian," she said abruptly. "Do you know why he is to be honored with our attentions?"

"I think they fear him, or are a little in doubt. Perhaps they hope you may be able to identify him. As for me, I am simply a watch-dog, to report how he gets on with La Croix, and how he is regarded by Miss Moina. But let me tell you his story as I know it."

And he hastily sketched the story as it had been related to Crashaw and Lugas by Miles La Croix. When he had finished, "You have forgotten to tell me his name," she said, with a strange look in her eyes.

"Pardon me; his name is Captain Fernand Makofski."

"Captain Fernand Makofski." She was on her feet with the words, her eyes glowing with excitement, the expression of her face inscrutable.

"Do you know him?" cried Savareis.

"I have read of his arrest and imprisonment," she said hastily.

"He—he was a brave man."

"Then perhaps your visit will have some interest to you."

"Undoubtedly." She resumed her seat and tried to resume her indifferent manner. "And you—you are bidden to become intimate with him, Rene." He started and flushed at the name. "Promise me something."

"Anything?"

"Whatever you see, or learn, or think concerning this man, this Captain Makofski, promise me that it shall be made known to me before it is reported at the central committee."

He gazed at her for a moment with a troubled face; then, "I promise," he said; "I belong to you more than to the central committee."

"Thank you. Some day I hope you will understand all this; will love me no less, and pity me more." Her face was strangely softened. "Until then,"—She held out her hand and smiled. He took it and kissed it humbly—"Until then, Rene, you know this: I trust you and count you my friend, my only friend at most. But Rene, what do you mean by what you said a moment since?—that you belong more to me than to the Cause? Tell me."

He got up and came nearer. They were both standing now.

"I mean this," he said firmly—"if it were not for you, if you were not identified with them, I would turn my back upon the society to-morrow. You know how I came into it, I think. You know, at least, that my father, who was a much-wronged man, allied himself to the revolutionists of Poland, served the cause abroad faithfully and dying besought me to devote myself to it in my turn. I was a mere stripling, brought from the university to stand beside his death-bed, and his life was almost gone. I took the oath he dictated; a strange,

wild oath it was. Rufus Crashaw was present and from that moment he has never lost sight of me. As soon as I left school I joined the order, and I tried honestly to serve it well. But I can not say that my heart was ever in it."

"What, not in those fiery speeches that made you quite famous over there?"

"Oh, that was my little gift, and that even wore itself threadbare. To stand night after night before those crowds—sometimes mad and unreasoning, sometimes stolid and brutal, never logical, never enlightened, never aught but selfish—it is enough to disillusion a more enthusiastic man than myself. But just when my fate seemed hardest and bleakest, Crashaw brought me to you. Do you know that I have sometimes thought that there was a design in it?"

"Upon whose part?"

"Upon his. Good heavens, did you think I could accuse you?"

"In your place many a man would do more, for I encouraged you to work on; I praised you, I glorified the cause and exhorted you to stand for it. I showed you ways, I invented new arguments. Ah, you have a right to hate me."

"Madam—"

"Wait, let us have this out. We are talking treason, both of us, and we know it. Nevertheless we will go on. You and I were European revolutionists. You embraced it as a duty; I—say that with me it was an enthusiasm. In Europe we might be still revolutionists perhaps, but here, oh Rene, you can no more be an American anarchist than I can. Our eyes have been opened over here. We have been behind the wings; we have seen the wheels within wheels my friend; promise me this: that you will be guarded, that you will not let them,

Crashaw and Lugas, see your dissatisfaction. Wait a little. Do not make enemies of these men yet. They are tigers. But this shall end—your bondage and my false position. Only have patience a little longer. Trust me and do not question me."

"And you will go then to see this stranger at La Croix'?"

"My friend, are we not pledged to the central committee? I shall obey; do you the same."

He was silent, gazing at her wistfully.

"I think I read your thoughts," she said. "You are wondering at my obstinacy. How many times have you asked me to see this Moina La Croix? and how often have I put you off with an evasion? Now I will tell you the truth. I have no reason for withholding my friendship from this lonely little friend of yours. I am forbidden."

"Forbidden!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; by the central committee."

"Oh!" he cried, "I begin to understand."

"And thanks to you, so do I. But wait. Trust me, I will obey my masters; and—this girl who seems so hemmed in, shall find a friend. And now you must go, I have something to do. Tell Mr. Lugas that I shall not fail him. Remember."

CHAPTER XLIV

STRANGE PROCEEDING

Up to the time when Captain Makofski became an inmate of the La Croix house, Dr. Lugas had never visited that abode except upon the evenings when business called them together. From the first, there had been no affinity between himself and Miles La Croix, who had accepted him as a fellow-worker, and knew his value as such, but who seemed well content to keep their intercourse upon a strictly business footing.

Now it was necessary that they meet Captain Makofski, for La Croix was intent on making him one of them. And so the two, Crashaw and Lugas, presented themselves in the studio one morning, when they found La Croix nervously laying on color, arrayed in his long, black artist's gown, and Makofski lounging with a cigar between his lips and the morning papers upon his knee.

The two revolutionists meant to be very acute and to penetrate any disguise or trickery, for they were quite ready to believe that Miles La Croix had been victimized in some manner by this stranger who had carried his house by storm.

Crashaw entered with his most English air, and Lugas more suave was yet supremely indifferent, and prepared to adopt a rather high tone.

But man's best laid plans fail often for lack of opportunity, and Crashaw and Lugas suddenly found the tables turned. Captain Makofski greeted them affably, it is

true, and entered readily into conversation; but there was no opportunity to overawe or patronize Makofski.

"Well?" said Crashaw, in a tone of inquiry when they were fairly out of the house and pacing the quiet street side by side. "He has got a firm foothold in La Croix' house, and if he is inclined to make us trouble, we may look out for him. It will be no child's play."

"Bah! I know all that. But what is he? Is he what he seems, or an impostor?"

"Very few of us, my dear sir, are just what we seem. He is disguised."

"Really! He told us that and that he meant to remain so."

"There is nothing beyond reason in his story. And if he is not Makofski, who is he? And why does he conceal himself? One thing is certain, he is a fixture there for the present, and we will be very foolish not to keep an eye on him. He does not seem particularly interested in us."

"We might write to Sharlan?"

"The very worst thing we could do. If he has sent this man, it would be a blunder. If he is what he pretends, or whatever he is, depend on it, that man is too clever to have made use of Sharlan's name without authority for the same."

While the two revolutionists were thus cheering each other, Princess Sacha entered Madeline's boudoir with the quiet, graceful movement peculiar to her in moments of haste, and paused directly before the low chair where Madeline reclined with a book in her hand.

"Do not rise, ma belle, I have only a moment to stay—only a word to speak. I have come to beg a favor." She

dropped down upon the ottoman, close beside Madeline and hurried on. "I am sure you will grant it, for you are always ready to do good. It is a little unusual, the thing I am asking of you, but it is a kind thing, and it must be right therefore."

"If it is right and kind," smiled Madeline, "we won't consult all the proprieties."

"Oh, thank you. Now I can get on bravely. There is in this city a family in whom one of my friends is much interested. He met them, I believe, in coming to this country. The father is strange and something of a hermit. And the daughter—my friend tells me, she is beautiful and good—is singularly alone. He has asked me more than once to see her, to try and be kind to her, but I have to consult, a little, the wishes, the prejudices of another."

"I understand," said Madeline aloud. To herself she said, "she wishes me to think that she means her supposed mother; I know better."

"To-day I learned that these people have a guest, a Russian, and a man whose name leads me to believe he may be one whom we used to be much interested in. And, to make a long story short, I am permitted to go now, where I was forbidden before, in the hope of finding a compatriot. But I must not be too kind to the young lady, should I chance to see her. Oh!" smiling up into Madeline's face, "it is terrible to be an aristocrat with prejudices. Now will you help me?"

"You have not told me in what way."

"Why, thus: we will drive there together, you and I. I will ask for the Russian guest, and while I am paying my respects to him, you naturally would be left to the courtesies of this young girl, would you not?"

"Perhaps."

"At any rate I can see no better plan, and I am

anxious to know this girl, to help her if I can. She is motherless and has had much trouble, I am told."

Madeline reflected. What was the Princess Sacha attempting? Why did she wish her company? For of course she did not for a moment believe this pretty version of the pretty story. Then she remembered a fragment of Drexel's advice concerning the princess: "See as much of her as you can; above all, try and learn who are her visitors and whom she visits." "I will go," she said.

"Good. Then it shall be at once—that is to-day."

At this moment Madeline's maid appeared at the doorway. Some one was waiting for madam, the princess. It was Rene Savareis whom she found awaiting her. He held a letter in his hand. "Honors are heaped upon me," he said bitterly. "To-day I am made a messenger. You know why I accepted the dignity."

"Perfectly, my poor Rene. But patience, and give me the letter."

"I hope I have brought you nothing unpleasant," he said as she took it from his hand.

She opened it hastily and read it, standing opposite him. Then her face clouded.

"Listen," she said, angrily, "and judge." She told him briefly of the plans she had formed for outwitting Crashaw and Lugas, by introducing Madeline into the La Croix home, and letting her bring about future meetings with Moina. Savareis had already heard of Sacha's acquaintance with "the beautiful American," as she had called her, but he knew her by no other name.

"All was arranged," finished Sacha, "and now comes this." And she struck the letter smartly with one little hand. "Hear it."

"MADAM:—It has been thought best that we go together (you and I) to see the Russian refugee, calling himself

Makofski. I have hoped that you might have chanced to have seen this man, as he has been in the army (if he is not an impostor) and posted, he tells us, for some time at Odessa, as well as at the capital. Should you recognize him, you will be pleased to signify the same to me at once. You will find me waiting for you promptly at four P. M. at the corner of the small oblong park, less than two blocks from La Croix' house. Please be punctual. Yours respectfully,

"By order of the committee. LUGAS."

She looked up, her eyes flaming. "The coward!" she cried. "The wretch! To dare this impertinence, and then to cloak it under the name of the committee. And I am to go with him to identify a—tell me," she caught his arm suddenly, "why are they so anxious about this man?"

"I can only say what I said yesterday. They fear him, I verily believe, but why—"

"Never mind why. I will go. Tell Mr. Lugas I will be prompt at the rendezvous."

"There is another amendment to the program. They want me to be there, also. I am to call upon Miss La Croix."

"I see! That is to prevent me from encountering her."

"Precisely. I am to be received in the drawing-room—you in the studio."

"Very good." Sacha's cheeks were burning hotly. "Let it be so. Only if some one else appears in the drawing-room you will give the two ladies all possible chance to exchange a few words."

"I will do whatever you wish."

When Savareis had taken his leave, the Princess Sacha went back to Madeline.

"It is odious!" she began in her pretty abrupt fashion. "All my plans are spoiled, unless you will consent to do a very quixotic thing. I have just received a note which informs me that another compatriot, a physician, will visit me to-day, and I shall have to take him to see this Russian officer, instead of going with you. We are as clannish as Jews, you see. And now, how shall we manage? I have set my heart on your meeting Moina La Croix."

"Whom?"

"Miss La Croix; Moina La Croix."

"And it is she then who is so alone; whose father is a recluse and"—she checked herself, and moderated her tone. "Pardon my surprise, but I think there can hardly be two Moina La Croix, and I made the acquaintance of Moina La Croix and her father en route from Europe to America on shipboard."

"And you know her?"

"We became quite friends, but of late have seen little of each other."

"Do you object to visiting her?"

"By no means. I will go at any time."

At half past three Madeline's carriage was at the door, and she was drawing on her gloves when a note was put into her hands.

She recognized Drexel's writing, and tossed aside the gloves, opened it, and read with amazement, these words:

"Please call, upon some pretext, and as soon as possible, upon Miss La Croix. Be kind to her; she needs a friend. And above all, contrive in some manner to see Mr. La Croix. Ask for him, if you must, stay to luncheon—anything, so that you see him. And then observe

him closely. Note if you find him the same as you knew him first, and write me the results of your observations at once. HURST."

And now it is Madeline's turn to be agitated. She paces up and down the room, with the note crumpled between her fingers. "What farce is this?" she murmured, "or perhaps what tragedy? What can it mean! The plot thickens indeed. Why do these two, who seem engaged in some nameless strife, unite in wishing this! Strange, very strange."

CHAPTER XLV

TOO COMPLICATED

Rene Savareis, up to the time of his arrival in America, had in accordance with the obligations taken upon himself in entering the circle to which he belonged, always obeyed the orders of the committee in charge, without question or reluctance. But his work had not been repulsive there—it had not outraged his finer feelings. He had been one of the mouth-pieces of the order, and little but words had been required of him. In New York things began so at first, but gradually there came a change. He became less an orator, and more, to use one of his own phrases, "a utility person;" instead of addressing meetings he was sent now and then to listen. He found himself collecting data and learning the strength of this guild and that, finding out the leaders of the different orders—not the officers only, but the man who was foremost in the time of strife—the stirrer up of strikes and riots. He was sent to the haunts of the socialists, the nihilists, the disaffected, by whatever name they chose to call themselves. And gradually he had come to look upon his work from a new point of view, and a most unsatisfactory one.

It was in one of these saloon visits that he had made the acquaintance of Hosmer, who had chanced to render him some slight service, and the two had struck fire at once. They were well-mated. Savareis lost no time in presenting Hosmer to Crashaw, and he was taken over to the house of Miles La Croix, but the visit was not repeated

and Crashaw listened coldly to Savareis' eulogies, and turned a deaf ear to his proposals to take Hosmer in and make him one of them.

"It won't do," Crashaw had said—"at least, not yet. We can't afford to take in any of these Americans with their western notions; certainly not until they've been well tested, and our footing here is firmer. Keep an eye on the fellow as much as you like. Use him if you may. But be careful. Tell him nothing. Learn all you can."

He was taken at his word. Savareis said no more about Hosmer, but the acquaintance grew, and as each learned more of the cause they had hastily espoused, they compared notes and expressions freely. And then, as the end proved, it was good for both. Each helped the other toward the solution of his individual riddle.

It was after a long and cheering talk with Kenneth, that Savareis took his way, at four o'clock, toward the La Croix abode. He had decided that to assist Sacha in gaining her point, he would do well to arrive late. And he loitered about, not too far away, until he saw Madeline's carriage draw up before the door. Now, being near enough to see her quite clearly, he recognized with much amazement, the young lady he had met on shipboard, and whom he had lost sight of since. In an instant his decision was taken. He waited long enough to feel tolerably sure that all had gone well, and that Madeline had been received, and then he walked to the nearest corner, where he found and entered a cab, just as the carriage of the Princess Sacha Orloff, with the lady and Lugas visible within, dashed past and up to the La Croix door.

Then he drove at once to Crashaw's rooms.

"What's this?" cried out that individual, seeing his cool entry. "Why are you not at your post?"

"Simply because I did not choose to run any risk.

Miss La Croix is safely diverted. She has a visitor who might have thought my appearance strange," and he told him of Madeline's visit, and reminded him of when they had met, omitting, however, the fact that this visit was due to the influence of the Princess Sacha.

"So," said Crashaw, knitting his brows, "that acquaintance has been kept up; it must not go on. It must be nipped in the bud."

"Really! Then I shall beg of you to do the nipping. I believed myself acting for the best interests of all, by retiring as I did."

"Oh, you were right enough. I was not criticising your course; on the whole, it was for the best. As for this new acquaintance, I will attend to that. I will break that off."

"I hope you see your way," said Savareis coldly.

"I do. I see it clearly. Give yourself no trouble about that."

Savareis said no more. He was thinking of Madeline Payne, as he remembered her during the pleasant days of that ocean voyage, and asking himself if, with Madeline Payne and the Princess Sacha against him, Crashaw would find his path as easy as he seemed to anticipate.

Meantime, Moina had received her friend with a mixture of pleasure and reserve that was at once noticed by Madeline. She noted too, the new look in the girl's face, and said to herself, "Drexel was right. She has had trouble, has suffered, and it has made her stronger. It has made her a woman."

There was, of necessity, much reserve on the part of each, and yet it was evident that they were cordially glad of this meeting. Moina told of her father's long illness, which she said had left him sadly changed. And

Madeline gave a modified version of Mr. Lord's sickness, and of Mrs. Ralston's nerves, and then told of her own removal to the Occidental. When this subject was exhausted, she asked her, with her most cordial smile, if she might not pay her respects to Mr. La Croix.

"I believe there are some people with papa," said Moina, with indifference. "We have a guest at present. But, by the by, I think the callers are for Captain Fernand quite as much as for papa. I will ask him to come to us."

And she rang for Margot and sent her with a request that her father would give her a few moments of his time. She did not mention Madeline's name.

If Captain Makofski had felt any uneasiness as to the outcome of the expected visit from Dr. Lugas and "a fair compatriot"—for Lugas had given her no other title in appointing their meeting—it had not been apparent when the Princess Sacha closely followed by Lugas swept into the room. By her own request she had been presented simply as Madam Orloff.

His greeting was calmly respectful, and hers, after a moment's survey of him, was smilingly cordial. She went toward him and put out her hand.

When she had been presented to Miles La Croix, and some general civilities had been exchanged, she turned again to Captain Fernand.

"Captain," she began, "I beg of you to assist my memory. Your face troubles me. Have we somewhere met before?"

"The face of the Princess Orloff is as familiar to me," he said gallantly, "as if it had been but days instead of years since it flashed past me in the carriage of the Prince Viadimei Orloff. Madam the Princess was still a

bride, and the toast and envy of half the capital, when I was unfortunately banished."

"Ah!" She was looking at him fixedly. "Then you were never presented to me. I had a fancy that you might have been. I must have seen your face."

"That is more than possible. You might have chanced to glance at me when on review, or sometime at the palace; I was much on duty there. But a presentation to Madam the Princess would have been an honor not to be forgotten."

"Yes," she said as if quite satisfied with the explanation, "that is it of course. We have met at the palace."

And then she began to talk of Russia, of nihilism, and she let him see without reserve, how much she was interested in the cause for which he had suffered. They talked of Odessa and St. Petersburg, of Siberia and the exile systems, even of Prince Viadimei Orloff and his illness and death. And on all topics, Captain Makofski met her half-way. The conversation was confined almost exclusively to these two. Miles La Croix retired within himself, and Lugas was almost ignored when he made an attempt to take a part in the conversation.

Princess Sacha seemed quite absorbed in the entertaining captain. She glowed and sparkled and smiled, and her talk flowed crisp and bright with abundance of animated gesture.

One would judge she was trying to fascinate him, thought Lugas, not too well-pleased. Captain Makofski was certainly a social success.

When Moina's message came, it was Princess Sacha who urged him to go.

"Go, I beg of you, sir," she said eagerly. "I regret that I am unable to pay my respects to your charming daughter in person, but present them to her, I beg, and say that at another time I hope to know her. See, I

have only a few moments more for Captain Makofski, and then—other engagements call. Go, my dear sir; no excuses, none."

When La Croix first stood in Madeline's presence, a look of doubt and perplexity rested for a moment on his face. Then it cleared and his greeting was like that of the old Miles La Croix. Moina's heart bounded as she noted it. But the better moment passed, and before he had been long in her presence, Madeline saw the change. What had been gravity, was now nervous preoccupation. The fine eyes had grown restless, the strong face had changed wofully. He spent an unquiet ten minutes with Moina and Madeline and then went back to the studio. Madeline did not seek to detain him. That ten minutes had been quite enough.

As Madeline was about to go, she stood with Moina just within the drawing-room door to say the usual parting words. Standing thus, she heard another door unclose, and then she stood transfixed, as the sound of a masculine voice, uttering farewell courtesies, fell upon her ear. Fortunately, Moina did not notice her start, and she recovered herself quickly.

"Papa's guests are going too," said Moina; "will you wait or—"

"I will go," said Madeline acting upon a sudden impulse. And she swept out and down toward the group just emerging from the studio. With a bow and smile for Mr. La Croix, a passing glance for Sacha, and another, swift and keen, that rested first upon the swarthy Lugas, standing beside the princess, and last and longest, upon the tall man with the bearded face and thick auburn hair who stood within the doorway uttering his goodbyes to Sacha, and who bent his head as she passed.

Margot and her maid were in the little ante-room near

the street entrance, and Madeline was in her carriage and rolling away before the princess had reached the street.

"Ah!" murmured Madeline as she leaned back among her cushions, "I have made a great discovery."

A moment later, Lugas, sitting opposite the princess and being wheeled along close behind Madeline's carriage said, "Well, it seems then that Captain Makofski is not an impostor."

"Did you hope to find him one?" she asked sharply.

He smiled and turned his glance streetward. "Whatever I hoped," he said, "I am now quite satisfied."

She was silent a moment, then in a more affable tone she asked: "Shall you ask him to join you?"

"I hardy know as yet—perhaps."

"You say that he does not go out at all?"

"That is what he says. At least he only strolls about a little, just for the sake of his health, you know, after dark."

Again she seemed thoughtful. "I should like to meet him again," she said.

"Then we must find you another opportunity," answered Lugas.

"Thank you."

He was watching her furtively, and she lowered her long lashes and tried to keep the sarcasm out of her voice.

When he was again alone with Crashaw, Lugas said—after giving a full report of the interview between Makofski and the princess—"one thing is clear to my mind. It is of the Princess Sacha that the captain spoke, when he mentioned a woman whom he might have cause to fear. There is no other possible. Now, does he know that this woman is the princess?"

"Can't say."

"Well, if he is what he pretends, and is well informed about this woman, then I am right, and you wrong—and the princess is a traitor. I am puzzled; I confess it. I don't understand either of them. But where was Savareis? He was not there, and some one else was."

"Yes, I know." Whereupon Crashaw, in his turn, explained Savareis' absence.

"I think, for once, the fellow acted judiciously," he concluded.

"If the lady had seen him on shipboard, he did well not to seem to be too familiar there."

"Who did you say this young woman is?"

"A Miss Madeline Payne. By the by, Savareis tells me that she is living at the Occidental, and has become quite well acquainted with the princess."

"Eh?"

"Is there anything so strange in that?"

"Well, no; but look here; we met, all of us, as we were taking leave, and the two women passed each other as strangers. I don't like this. There are too many complications."

"Well, never mind the woman, but let's get back to our Russian captain. We must fix his position, and we can't do it too soon."

"Where he is concerned," said Lugas grimly, "we can do but one of two things. Either he must be got rid of before we begin to act again, or he must become one of us."

CHAPTER XLVI

A NEW ALLY

Neither Madeline nor the princess were inclined for conversation, upon their return.

More than ever, Madeline studied the Princess Sacha with wonder and doubt. Who was the strange man with the dark foreign face? and where did she take him up? That he was not a visitor at the hotel, she was very sure. And what an unprepossessing face!

Finally she began a letter toDrexel, telling him the story of the entire day.

Madam Sacha presented herself in Madeline's boudoir in due time, and thanked the latter warmly and in the prettiest of phrases for her "goodness in calling upon Miss La Croix," while she regretted the foolish prejudices which compelled her to remain aloof. But she did not follow up the subject and withdrew soon.

Madeline dined alone and late, and when she entered her boudoir immediately after, she found Minna awaiting her—bright-eyed and eager.

"It has happened already, my fraulein," she began. "The young Frenchman has been in the rooms of the princess for half an hour."

"Oh!" Madeline reflected for a moment, then taking a sudden resolution, she said: "Go to the princess, Minna, and say to her, with my compliments, that if she is disengaged for the evening, I will join her, unless she will kindly come to me here."

"Yes, fraulein."

Minna was back in a moment, with her quiet step and demure manners.

"Madam the princess begs to be excused," she said. "She is going out this evening." And then in a more confidential tone she added, "I entered as usual, fraulein, for the door of the ante-room was not locked. Before I was fairly in, I heard madam's voice. She was just inside the curtains, with the young gentleman, who must have been taking his leave. 'Say to him that I will come,' she was saying. 'But this must not be repeated. It is not safe. I will not risk it. I will come to-morrow at ten o'clock. I will come alone. Is it far?' Then I heard him say: 'No; you can walk it easily. But you will not let me go with you?' 'No,' she said, 'I will go alone.' I dared not listen any more. I could see the curtain shake as if she were about to draw back. I made a sound with the door as if I had just opened it and I called softly, Justine, Justine. Madam was before me in a moment, looking angry and startled. I gave her your message and came away."

Madeline looked thoughtful. "You may go, Minna." she said.

Minna withdrew, but in a few moments was back again.

"Well, Minna?"

Minna seemed a little embarrassed. She fidgeted nervously as she proffered her request. "Would the fraulein permit her to go out? If she did not need her, of course. She had an errand and she would come back soon. It was early and she was not afraid."

Madeline eyed her closely and a smile curved the corners of her mouth. For a moment it seemed that she was about to refuse, but at last she said:

"I shall not need you for an hour or more. You may go."

"THEY ARE MUCH TROUBLED TO ACCOUNT FOR YOUR PRESENCE IN THIS COUNTRY."—Moina, p. 295.

Ten minutes later a lady dressed in dark, plain garments, and wearing a drooping hat which shadowed and half concealed her features, emerged from the private door, used only by the resident patrons of the Occidental, and walked briskly eastward.

Half a block away, a second female figure overtook her and in passing, turned briskly, saying: "Is it you, Madam the Princess, and alone?"

It was in truth Princess Sacha, and starting slightly, she halted and answered quietly enough:

"Why, Minna, you startled me. Yes, it is I. I wanted to come out and Justine had a headache. I am only going to post some letters and—and by the time I am back, my carriage will be ready. I am going out, you know."

"To post some letters? Then I may see madam safe to the letter-box and back, may I not? I am going there too."

"Y—yes," she said slowly. "Only I did not mean to walk so far. Perhaps—Minna, suppose you take the letters, yours and mine, and post them where they will go quickest. It is almost time for my carriage."

"Certainly, madam. I am not afraid, and I know where to go."

She took the two letters which the princess held out to her, and when they had gone a block further eastward the lady said:

"I think I will turn back now. Be careful, Minna, and post them safely."

She stood for a moment watching the girl as she made her way with quick, sure steps across the street, and then turned and retraced her steps.

At the second corner a little man appeared, suddenly, at her side and made the crossing with her silently, proffering his assistance where the crowd was thickest, which she as silently accepted.

When they had reached the further side, she put a hand upon his arm and they both slackened their pace.

"Well?" she said under her breath.

"There is much to say," began the man respectfully. "I have heard from Sharlan." His tone had been low from the first word, but as he uttered this name, he glanced about him and dropped his voice yet lower. "He is at a loss in this matter. He was surprised to learn that the man Lugas, occupies so high a place here. It is by no authority of his. He will make further investigations, and if the man is dangerous, if what you say, or fear, proves true—"again he paused and looked about him—"there is but one way."

Under the drooping hat her eyes gleamed and her lips were tightly compressed. "And that?" she whispered.

"The last resort, and—it will rest in your hands."

She shivered and drew a little away from him, as putting a hand inside the breast of his coat, he withdrew a small package and proffered it to her.

"It is the only way," he said. "You realize our position—yours as well as mine. Without that, his power is beyond yours. With it—"

"With it, it may be a drawn game—a battle," she supplemented. "I am not afraid." She held the package firmly now, and threw back her head.

"Nor I, I hope." The man's tone was strangely even and emotionless.

"I was thinking of the others, not of you, my friend," she said. "But go on. What else have you to tell?"

"They are much troubled to account for your presence in this country."

"I know that."

"Do you know that they have written to the European correspondents to learn, if possible, what your mission here really is?"

"No. Have they done that?"

"Yes; and more and worse. They profess to fear you may be, after all, in the service of the Russian police."

"Oh!" She stifled a mocking laugh. "I wonder what they would think your mission might be if they knew you were here?"

"Luckily for me, they do not know that I am here. I am suffered to be a limping fixture in Thames street."

They walked on in silence for a moment, then: "Is that all from abroad?" she asked.

"Not quite. Since they have learned over there that Crashaw, who was sent here as the head of the circle or our half of it, has abdicated in favor of Miles La Croix, who is accredited as second on their roll, it has set them thinking. They have made some discoveries which will be communicated to us duly. Crashaw, you know, was appointed one of the trustees of the funds collected here."

"Yes."

"They are investigating, I think, in that direction."

"Oh!" It was evident from her tone that this item of information was of slight interest to her. Suddenly she asked: "Did you ever hear of one Fernand Makofski, Dissel?"

The man started. "The name is familiar," he said.

"It is the name of a Russian officer exiled shortly after the killing of the czar. He is said to have escaped and to be in the home of Miles La Croix. Are you sure you do not know him?"

"Quite sure."

"I must see this man, and I want you to be my messenger. I have here a letter that must be delivered this evening, if possible; you need only ask for him, and if he does not choose to appear, leave it in the hands of

the maid-servant, saying that you will await an answer."

"And how will you get the answer, madam?"

"Oh, I shall not ask you to bring it. It will be quite safe to trust it to a messenger, only I must have it early. You will go?"

"I am yours to command, madam."

"Thank you, Dissel. We will turn here. You may walk with me to the next street. I am near my hotel then. When shall I meet you next? I am growing quite familiar with the city."

"And I," he said. "Let our next meeting be by day. You will find the place set down on this card. We shall be quite secure there."

"Very well. That was a nice thought of yours, Dissel, to meet at stated times and never twice in the same place."

"I cannot be too thoughtful of you, madam," he said.

A moment later they were at the street corner and both halted.

"Good-night, Dissel."

"Good-night, madam."

The two stood for a moment, hesitating, as if each had a word more which it was hard to utter. She moved away a pace and then came nearer.

"Dissel, there is a little, a little hope. I am promised some news soon." And now she put out her hand.

"God grant it!" he said, bending over her hand. Suddenly it was withdrawn.

"Good-night," she whispered over her shoulder and was gone, while he stood gazing after her fleeting figure until it was lost among the passers-by.

"A daring woman," he muttered, as she turned away, "and a determined." Then shaking his head slowly—"How will it end, I wonder? How will it end?"

An hour after leaving Madeline's presence, Minna was

back again. She entered the boudoir and came and stood directly before her mistress.

"May I tell the fraulein something?"

"Go on, Minna."

"As I went out I overtook a lady who was walking not very fast. This was half a block away, fraulein. I passed her and behold it was madam the princess."

Here the girl paused and looked her mistress full in the face. "Shall I go on, fraulien?"

For a moment Madeline returned the gaze calmly and a trifle coldly.

Then she said, "Go on, Minna."

Whereupon Minna related with minuteness, her interview with the princess, up to the point when the letters were put into her hand, and the two had parted at the street corner.

Here she paused again and as Madeline remained silently awaiting her next words, she finally asked:

"What would you have had me do next, fraulein?"

"What did you do, Minna? Come, I understand; you were acting to please me. Tell me how it ended."

"I took the letters, fraulein, and went across the street. It was not so light on that side, and after I had walked a few steps, I turned back and stood in the shadow of a great portico. Madam had been looking after me too, it would seem, for I saw her in the place where I had left her. But at that moment she turned and went back; I crossed again and was walking quickly, trying to keep her in sight, for I knew that she had meant to shake me off, when quick as that,"—illustrating by a swift gesture, —"she turned again and came fast toward me. I could do nothing then but go close to the wall, and stand there. She passed without seeing me. She went back to the same corner, and I followed. Then she turned, going north, and a little further on a man joined her. Ah,

fraulein, if you could have seen him! He was worse than the dark man. That is, I could not see his face, being all the time behind them, but he was not a gentleman at all—a little man who walked awkwardly and was dressed like a tradesman. She took his arm and they walked slowly, seeming to talk together earnestly. Of course I could not come too near, and when they separated, I saw madam the princess come back here. Her carriage was at the door, and she got into it at once."

"And you, Minna?"

"Perhaps my kind fraulein will say that I have done wrong. I meant it well. I came up to my room, not having either paper or pencil with me, and I wrote down the names that were upon madam's two letters; then I went out and posted them. Here are the names upon the two letters. I wrote them very carefully." She held out a half-sheet of note paper, upon which was written two addresses.

The first was a Russian address, and Madeline rightly guessed it to be that of a steward or business agent.

The second was that of Rufus Crashaw.

Here was a discovery indeed. Madeline pondered over it so long, that Minna said deprecatingly: "Have I done wrong, my fraulein?"

Madeline put down the slip of paper.

"We will not go into the right or wrong of your adventure, Minna. What you have done would be wrong, nine cases out of ten. But at least you have not displeased me. I have a strong reason for wishing to know as much as I can of this lady, the Princess Sacha Orloff. My reason is an honest one, and it concerns another more than myself. If I did not know that I could trust you, I should not say this to you nor allow you to do as

you have done. But I tell you now frankly, that you have done me a service."

"And may I still serve in the same way? I am sure I can help my fraulein, and since it is for a good reason—ah, listen." She went on eagerly. "I have served you, and well I hope, for nearly three years. Before then I was much abroad. I saw much of strange doings among the great people. When I came to you, fraulein, I learned very soon, that now I had a mistress who was a true lady, who lived all her life in the open day. All has been right, all has been true. Now when we meet this madam the princess, what do I see? Ah, such a difference. I see some things and I hear more from the French woman. I could tell my fraulein much. I could tell her—"

But Madeline interrupted her with a gesture.

"Not now, Minna," she said; "we will talk of this again. I want to be alone."

When Minna was gone, she sat down to her desk again and began to write, smiling now and then at the thought of Minna's acuteness and knowing that for the rest of the battle she had a stanch ally close at hand.

CHAPTER XLVII

A HEART'S AWAKENING

Captain Fernand received the summons of the Princess Sacha from the hands of Margot, while he sat in the study with Mr. La Croix—read it with an impassible face, and asked permission to write a reply then and there. It was an odd reply, containing neither date, address nor signature, and it did not take long to pen it.

Selecting a small sheet of paper from the well-stocked desk, the captain wrote the one word—"Yes"—in neat Roman letters like the smoothest print. He did not seek to see the messenger, but when Margot had carried away his brief reply, he drew his chair close to that of Miles La Croix, and silently placed the letter of the princess before him.

He took it up, adjusted his spectacles, and read it without a word. It was written in a caustically polite strain.

"Madam the princess was not at all satisfied with her meeting with Captain Makofski. Naturally it was something rare to meet a countryman in America, and one too, who came from her own city, who knew those whom she knew. She had many things to ask of him. Doubtless he could tell her much that was interesting. Would he come to her at the earliest moment possible? He must not refuse her this. In Russia it would have been her's to command, and his to obey. She should consider herself in Russia, and command his presence in her salon at eight o'clock of the following evening."

Thus ran the letter, and when he had read it, Miles La Croix put it down with a frown upon his face.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"She commands, you see, and has made it very easy to accept, and to signify my obedience." He moved his hand toward the letter and Miles La Croix took it up again.

There was a postscript as follows: "Pray waste no words in accepting or refusing. Write, and send by my messenger, one word—yes or no."

"I wrote the one word, 'yes,'" said the captain, as La Croix again put down the letter.

The frown still rested upon the old man's face. "That woman," he said slowly, "if I have understood right, is the one whom you may have reason to fear."

"Yes."

"And yet you go."

"It is my wisest course, I am sure, and my safest. That letter as you see, is a command. It carries an undercurrent of meaning. Still, pardon me, I have been too hasty. If I pay this visit, and if evil comes of it, it will be most embarrassing to you. I should have consulted you." He got up and paced about the room as if mentally disturbed.

"You should not go," said La Croix with decision.

"You think so?"

"Yes."

Makofski resumed his seat near the old man, whose eyes were glittering while his cheeks glowed with excitement.

"I have written too hastily, perhaps, that I would come; I can recall that assent, but it will entail a penalty, a penalty that I would risk much to avoid."

"What penalty?"

"The loss of your society, sir. Banishment from your

roof. If Madam Orloff is what I fear, I can not refuse to obey her and remain here. That would be to subject you to danger. I should be watched and you do not want your house spied upon, I take it. It would be ruinous to you. May I speak plainly, without fear of giving you offense?"

"Go on."

"Madam Orloff, whom I had looked upon as an enemy, is brought to see me by your friends, Lugas and Crashaw, in the character of a revolutionist, or at least as a sympathizer with revolutionists; I will not ask you why, for I think I know their reason; they doubted me."

"Wait," cried the old man. "Yes, you are right. They feared that you were not—not yourself, not Makofski in reality—only some one personating him. They brought the princess in the hope that she might unmask you if you were an impostor."

"Ah!" Makofski threw back his head and laughed.

"But they doubt the princess a little also. And if you go to her now, they will become yet more suspicious."

"I see! They will say that we are both spies, and that she recognized me quite too readily."

"Something like that."

"The case is here, my friend. If I refuse to go to this lady, I must leave your house. I must hide myself anew, and this time it will be even more difficult than before. Besides, if I go away thus, I leave you—yes, and your friends, in a measure open to suspicion. In short if the princess is a spy, and I flee from her, I am lost, and you suspected. If I go to her, run the gauntlet, baffle her, or convince her that I am an ally, everything remains the same, only I must be on my guard in the future."

"I wish that you would join us, Makofski."

"And your associates—they do not."

"They will when they know you better."

Captain Fernand laughed the easy, confident laugh of a man who was secure in his own strength. Clearly he understood this old man, with his flashes of excitement and his varying moods. The argument was long, and while the captain seemed to concede point after point, it ended in what he had fully intended it to do, as if he were doing it at the urgent request of his host.

At last Captain Makofski, with much reluctance, consented to allow his host to bring him before the members of the next meeting, as a candidate for admittance to the brotherhood.

"You must show them my position," he stipulated. "I know so little of your work here, I will go into nothing blindly, and I desire on my side, to be clearly understood. There must be no concealment."

Miles La Croix was exultant. He told the news to Moina as she sat by his bedside, where he lay wide awake and his eyes streaming with excitement of what he considered a triumph and a gain to the great cause. He was growing more communicative toward Moina as the girl became more quietly receptive, and ceased to argue, to explain and to criticise.

She listened to him now with no surprise, and with perfect acquiescence.

If he had been the observant father of old, he would have seen how the girl's face grew grave, and overspread with a look of disappointment. She was beginning to know Captain Fernand and to regard him more and more as a friend.

"You are going to become one of the 'group', papa tells me," she hazarded next day, while the two sat alone in the drawing-room awaiting the coming of her father and tea-time.

"Yes, unless I am rejected," he answered lightly.

"You must be lenient with me, Miss La Croix. I am not an enthusiast. I shall have to grow in grace."

"Do you mean," she asked eagerly, "that you do not love the cause?"

"I do not know the cause. I—"

"Then why, why did you promise to join them?"

"Why? Really, I suppose it was owing partly to the pressure of circumstances. I have no strong convictions, but my heart is warm toward all poor, all oppressed humanity, and then it was greatly for your father's sake. I am glad to be allied to anything that is dear to him, and to you."

"To me?" She threw back her head and her eyes flashed upon him. "Don't say dear to me, it is detestable. Oh, yes, I thought it good and holy once. I was proud of papa's connection with it. But I was ignorant then—a poor fool! And my poor father! He is its slave. Some day he will be its victim. Oh, why do you join them?" She had risen in her excitement, and now she started and came to a sudden stop. "What am I saying?" she said; "I think I am losing my senses!" She turned away, and then suddenly faced him. "Will you forget this?" she asked brokenly; "I forgot myself. I did not—" She stopped short.

"Are you about to say that you did not mean it?" he asked gravely.

"No, I will not say that."

"Pray, calm yourself, Miss La Croix, and let me assure you that every word that you have uttered shall be to me, as if I were-oath bound; yes, more sacred, if possible. I am glad to know your feelings, and I beg you to trust me fully."

"No, not when you have become one of them."

"Before, then. Will you not talk with me again upon this subject? And pray, calm yourself now. Your father

may join us at any moment. I can help you, I am sure I can help you. As for your father—"

The sound of a closing door caused them both to start. "When may I talk with you again?" he asked hastily.

"To-night, perhaps, or—"

His countenance fell. "Not this evening," he said regretfully. "I must go out. I have promised—"

"Hush!" she exclaimed, and with the word, the door opened and admitted Miles La Croix. During the rest of that day, there was a lightening of the cloud upon Moina's brow. She was grave still, and very thoughtful, seeming to have ample food for solitary reflection. But if Madeline could have seen her face to-day, she would have said, "She has found something to cheer her or comfort her. The world is not so dark as yesterday."

Miles La Croix shut himself up in his study after dinner, and Captain Fernand joined him there for a short time.

As she was about to leave the empty drawing-room—unaccountably dreary, for some reason, she had found it—Moina met him at the door. He was dressed for the street, and carried his hat and a light cane in his well-gloved and shapely hand.

"What!" she exclaimed in her surprise, "you are going out?" And then she saw that he carried a letter in his hand.

"Yes," he said, without seeming to notice her sudden change of countenance, "it seems that I must. I will be quite safe, and I expect to be back early. I was seeking you—about to ask of you a favor."

"A favor?" she faltered.

"It is only this: I wish, if I may, to leave this letter in your hands. You perceive it is not addressed. Under this envelope is another. If I am not present to-morrow at the breakfast hour, will you remove this outer

wrapper, and send the inclosure at once, by a district messenger? It is fully addressed. One thing more: do not speak of this to your father, I beg. It would make him uneasy, perhaps, and he is already exceedingly nervous."

She took the letter and bowed her head, but no words came, and he saw her face growing pale.

"I beg you not to be uneasy," he said. "This is only a precaution; I do not apprehend danger."

"And yet—" She held up the letter and said no more.

"That, I repeat is a precaution. A carriage is at the door. I shall not leave it until I have reached my destination. No harm could possibly reach me there. And I shall return in the same way. In the morning you will give back my letter, and I may be able to amuse you with some account of my mission. And now—" he stood silently regarding her for a moment, then suddenly held out his hand—"fancy me going out to battle, and wish me success."

"I wish you success," she said tremulously—"success and safety." He smiled as he turned at the stair-head, and she answered the smile. But when the street door had closed upon him, she went back to her own boudoir, the letter clasped tightly in her hand and the shadow upon her brow and in her eyes once more.

Miles La Croix retired early that night, and Moina sat beside him and mutely stroked his hand, letting sleep come as it would—forgetting him, almost, so absorbed was she with her own thoughts. An hour passed and then another, the eyes of the old man still wide open and sleepless. He was not restless, however. Instead, he was almost smiling, absorbed, like Moina, with his own thoughts.

As the hours grew late it was Moina who grew restless. And when her father slept she began to move

about the room—to pace to and fro—to lift a corner of the curtain and peer down into the street below. Midnight struck. Her father slept on while her own agitation increased. Going to the bedside she would put out a hand as if to waken the sleeper; then she would draw back, and start and listen, as some street sound was borne to her eager ears.

So another long hour passed. And now her watch at the window was almost constant. At last she could bear the suspense no longer. She went again to the bedside. She had turned down the lights until the objects about the room were but dimly discernible. As she moved swiftly forward, twixt anxiety and sudden determination, her foot struck against a footstool, and it was thrust against a frail reading-stand which held a heavy open book. Down came the stand and book with a crash. The accident seemed to calm her but it disturbed the sleeper, who turned in his bed and began to mutter, but without waking.

Moina stood still for a moment, with a hand pressed against a loudly beating heart. There was something she was burning to know—a question she was longing to ask. Any other question she might have put to him as he slept, and been very sure of her answer. But not this question—not this. For the sake of others she had taught herself to wrest hateful secrets from the lips of a sleeping father. For her own sake she could not—she could not.

Miles La Croix had fallen asleep, thinking of his coming argument with Lugas and Crashaw, and of the announcement he should make. There would be opposition, he well knew, and warm discussion. He was eager for it all. He had decided what he should say, and as slumber overcame him, he was rehearsing the scene for his own pleasure. "You mistake, sirs," Moina heard him

say, his voice becoming more distinct as he went on. "He has been perfectly frank with me. I know where he went. He showed me her letter."

"Her letter!" Moina, stopping to rescue the fallen book, sprang suddenly erect again.

"How can I guess what she wanted. A woman like that," he went on; "and he told me to tell you. That man does not fear you, and as for madame la princess—" The hands of the sleeper were thrown out as if in significant gesture. "Eh, what's that? Both enemies, spies! Met before, you say?" He threw himself violently across the bed and then, as if awakened by the rage of his dream, sat suddenly erect and looked about him with wide-open eyes.

Moina stood still. She knew that her father was awake, that she ought to go to him. But her feet seemed leaden, and in her ears rang the words "enemies, spies, madame la princess." In her mind one thought drove out all else. Fernand Makofski, who had sought refuge under her father's roof from danger that might lie in wait anywhere outside, forgot the danger, or braved it recklessly, at the bidding of Madame la Princess Orloff.

CHAPTER XLVIII

WHO LAUGHS LAST

It was a little past the hour when Captain Makofski presented himself in the boudoir of Princess Sacha.

"I sent for you, yes, captain," she said, "and I am greatly your debtor for this pleasure."

He bowed and seated himself, with the cool air of a man who, having not the least personal interest in the occasion or its object, is quite at the disposal of the lady. If Captain Makofski had known the Princess Sacha very well, indeed he could not have chosen a surer way of ruffling her composure, had he wished to accomplish such a result.

Finally she spoke again. "I fear that my request was not to your liking, Captain Makofski. You are wondering, of course, why I saw fit to know you yesterday."

"It was very good of you."

"It was not so meant, I assure you. But I will explain. When I was told that a Russian exile was here, I was naturally a trifle interested, even before I knew that the gentleman, in whose company you saw me yesterday, as well as his friend, Rufus Crashaw, wished us to meet. You may be aware of their reasons."

"They were skeptical as to my identity. They hoped to confound me through you, or to confirm my uncorroborated statement, I believe," he said negligently.

"Exactly so. I have said that I wish to see you, Captain Makofski. For this I had a reason."

"Yes?"

"I did not know the motive of the two men. I did not know whether my identification would help or hurt Fernand Makofski, the exile. And so I said to myself, I will be cautious. Perhaps it will be well to feign ignorance. I may be able to serve Makofski best if I meet him as a stranger. You will perceive that I set out with the desire to be of use, if possible." Here the smile became a soft little laugh. "For—how oddly things come about in this odd little world we inhabit; over there, in Russia, before his banishment to Siberia, I knew Fernand Makofski very well."

She had lowered her eyes again, for just a moment before firing this shot, the better to emphasize it later. But the smile died out of her face, and for a moment the two sat silently regarding each other. And now it was he who was smiling; it was he who spoke first.

"I can hardly forgive myself," he said, "for having caused you, madame la princess, even a passing disappointment. But as you have made it easy for me to ask the question, permit me: Do I fill the role of Captain Fernand Makofski acceptably?"

The face of madame la princess would have furnished a superb study in expression. Amazement, incredulity, anger, and finally something bordering upon admiration, flashed across her face. Slowly she pushed back her chair; slowly she arose.

"Captain Makofski, could he see and pardon the masquerade, could not but admire the manner in which it is carried out! Such sang froid, not to use a harsher name, is beyond praise. May I ask the object of this impersonation?"

The man before her dropped his careless smile and lounging attitude. He sat erect, and his face became coldly inscrutable.

"Let us call a truce, madame," he said. "You have sent for me. I am here. Wherefore?"

"What!" The princess recoiled a step and the hot blood flashed into her face. "This is insufferable!" she cried. "Wherefore? why have I sent for you? I will tell you, monsieur. You, who call yourself Fernand Makofski—I have sent for you to tell you that you are an impostor; that Fernand Makofski, who was once my friend, and a true man, is languishing in a Siberian dungeon, or lying in a Siberian grave. Such men do not escape the clutches of the tyrant! And you—who are you, and why have you dared—how have you dared assume the name of a Russian martyr?"

"That I might watch over and protect other martyrs, perhaps," he said with dignity. "Madam, compose yourself. Surely you have something more to say that is more to the purpose than all this?" His coolness was like fuel to flame.

"More to the purpose? Yes, if it is more to the purpose to tell you that I mean to unmask you, to denounce you!"

"And to whom?" The coolness of the man; the unwavering gleam of the eye behind their sheltering glasses; the attitude so firm, and so self-assured; more than all perhaps, a something in the voice, struck through her wrath and startled her into silence for a moment. When she spoke again it was in a calmer tone. She knew that she had a more than ordinary foe to deal with.

"To the man you have imposed upon, probably for some base end: to Miles La Croix."

"Ah! to him? And since when has madame the princess felt so keen an interest in Miles La Croix and his affairs?"

"That need not concern you. It will also interest the police to learn the truth about you."

"You think so? well, perhaps you are right. And your friends, Messrs. Lugas and Crashaw? what of them?"

"They will need but a hint. They suspect you already."

"Say they did suspect me. Thanks to you, madam, they suspect me no longer. And how may I ask do you intend to explain your own course? You have recognized me, claimed me as Fernand Makofski, an acquaintance, almost a friend. How will you unsay this? Reflect madam."

"Don't think I am unprepared for that," she said; "I shall tell them—I can afford to be candid with you—that all I did was a snare to lead you on, to get you to commit yourself, to entangle yourself hopelessly."

"Good. Now for the sake of the argument, let us suppose this done. You have denounced me. It becomes my turn. You are possibly aware that your loyalty is doubted in some quarters? You are, it is feared, secretly devoted to the Russian government."

"Absurd!"

"It is not I who believe this of course, but others. Well, you denounce me. I denounce you. I tell those who may be called to judge between us that you sent for me and found me opposed to you. As you know Captain Makofski so well, you no doubt will remember that there was and still is a fraction who declared him loyal; and that he always denied the charge of nihilism. Finding me then opposed to you, that is to say, not an emissary to the Russian police, you turn upon me, for your own safety. You will say that all you have done was a snare for me. But to minds already tortured with suspicion, that tale will sound improbable. Unless you can prove—prove mind you—that you are loyal to the cause, you will not destroy me, madam, but yourself."

"Do your worst!" the princess said; "you have un-

done yourself. Whatever I might have done—that is past. I shall denounce you. I shall unmask you."

"You have another object."

"You think so?" sneeringly.

"I am sure of it. It was, perhaps, to offer me an alternative, to make terms, that you sent for me."

"You presume quite too much," she said coldly; "I should have asked you first, perhaps, what was your motive in fastening yourself upon the La Croix—"

"Go on, madam."

"In taking upon yourself the name of Fernand Makofski—"

"Proceed."

"Yes, why have you forced yourself into the La Croix household?"

"Forced myself? Not at all. I am, I believe, a very welcome guest. Only this evening I proposed to seek other quarters and was overruled in no moderate terms."

"Oh, have that as you will. No doubt Moina La Croix finds the society of a Russian officer charming. She—"

"Madam, we will leave the name of that young lady out of the conversation; it has no place in it." This time there was unmistakable sternness in his voice.

"Ah! Then it was on her account?" At last she had found a vulnerable point, she thought exultingly. At last she had broken that tantalizing calm. "That now would have been a different affair; have put another face upon things. I might not have interfered."

He was silent.

"Ah, but I see you are awake at last. Well, let me render good for ill. In return for what you have not told, I tell you the name of the man she is to marry. It is Rufus Crashaw."

With one quick stride he was close beside her, grasping her jeweled arm with a grip of steel.

"Woman," he said between set teeth, "are you telling me the truth?"

And now both faces were pale.

"Insolent impostor! Ah! I have had enough of this! Leave me! Go! Go at once! Whoever you are, whatever you are, I have done with you. Before sunrise to-morrow the police, Crashaw, Lugas and the La Croix, father and daughter—all shall know that you are not Fernand Makofski—that you are a spy, an assassin, perhaps. Go, I say go!"

The nameless one was himself again.

"Gladly as I would go, madam, I have yet a duty to perform."

"Go, I tell you."

"I might take you at your word, and so avenge myself."

She made a furious gesture, and sprang toward the bell.

"Madam La Princess, neither now or at any other time will you 'denounce' me, or in any other way interfere with my plans, for in doing so you would destroy your own hopes, baffle your dearest wishes, render your visit to America, and its real object of no avail."

She caught her breath quickly.

"In heaven's name," she cried, "what are you? who are you?"

"I am the one man," he said slowly, "and the only man, who can help you to a knowledge of the truth concerning Basil Petralowski. Look, this farce has gone far enough. It was not of my seeking."

He let go her hands, and as on the day of his interview with Miles La Croix, removed the disguising wig, beard and spectacles, standing thus before her with a look of severity upon his face.

"You!" gasped the princess, after a long, incredulous stare, and with dilating eyes and pallid cheeks; "You!"

CHAPTER XLIX

FRANK PRICE SPEAKS

On the morning that followed the interview between the Princess Sacha and the strange personage whom we will continue to call Fernand Makofski, a little group was gathered in one of the private rooms of St. Luke's Hospital, where Frank Price lay.

Near the bed, on the side opposite the nurse, sat two others—one, a small man with an expressionless countenance—the other, a large man, with a benevolent expression, who sat in the background, and who was in fact, a policeman in plain clothes, our friend Bates. The small man held in his hand a voluminous memorandum. Glancing at this, as if to refresh his memory he said: "You think he is quite able to talk to-day, doctor?" He spoke low and the physician replied in the same tone:

"Yes."

"I am going to speak about the night on which you were hurt, Frank," began Little Norton. "And I will tell you right here you need not fear that you are going to be blamed for anything that may have happened. We are all your friends and we hope, among us, to be able to find out something that will be of benefit to—" he hesitated and then concluded, "to your mother and yourself."

"Yes, sir," answered the boy in his husky whisper, which they had to follow closely to fully understand.

"Do you remember all that happened that day?"

"Yes, sir. I have thought it all over and over."

"You took a basket of flowers to a house—"

"No," he said, with a look of regret and contrition fixed upon his face, "no, sir. I am very sorry, sir, but I didn't take in the flowers. It was another boy."

Little Norton continued to smile reassuringly.

"Ah! That was the way of it," he said. "Well, never mind. What was the name of this other boy?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Nor where he lived?"

"No, sir."

"Well, well, Frank, you just tell us what you can about this boy; where you met him and how he came to take the basket. Don't hurry nor get excited; it's all right."

Again the nurse moistened the boy's lips and changed his position slightly, and then he began:

"I never saw the boy until the day I took the basket to that house on Fifth Avenue; but I remember just how it all was because," reflectively, "he seemed a little green, I thought. There was two or three of us started out of the store together, but we separated afore we'd got far. When I was crossin' over, goin' to Broadway to the avenue, I got into a crowd at the corner and had to stop a minute. It was there I met the boy. There was a card stuck on the end of the basket with the name of the man it was for and the number of his house. An' I remember noticing that it was written very big and black, so it was easy to read. He was a little feller, littler than me, and he kind o' looked up good-natured like, an' laughed, an' says he, 'don't git mad. I didn't mean nothin.' I seen the name on that card jist as I was standin' here, and then I took another peek to see if I wasn't mistaken. Why, I know that place right well. I've got an uncle livin' there.' We got acrost the street, and he kept walkin' along beside me.

And then he told me about his uncle, who was some kind of a head servant there, and how he wanted so much to go in and see that beautiful house, and his uncle would never let him, and he'd just like to pop in with me and surprise him."

Again he paused and the doctor said: "Don't try to tell too much, Frank, just tell about the flowers."

"He was dressed first rate," Frank resumed, almost as if he had not heard, "and he had some candy in his pocket and he took out some money out of another pocket and kind o' jingled it as he talked. When we had got most to the house, he was a-showin' me the way, he turned round kind o' quick like, and says, 'Look here, you let me take that basket into the house just for a joke on uncle, and to see the house inside, and then the laugh'll be on him. I'll make him give me something for a treat. He's real liberal. And then you and me'll go snooks with it.' "

"You let him take the basket at the foot of the step?" asked Norton.

"Yes, sir."

"Did he stay in the house long, talking with his uncle?"

"No, sir. He came out quick, looking kind of scared, I thought. 'Let's hurry,' he says; 'there's a party there, and they hustled me out.' "

"And so you hurried away together. And he left you soon, did he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he ask you not to tell that he took the flowers? And did he ask you to meet him again at the corner where you were hurt?"

"Yes, sir. He said we would have a little supper together."

"Now, Frank, try and tell me just how you got hurt. You met and started to cross the street?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see, before you started to cross, a little old man who stood near you?"

The boy struggled as if to lift himself, and his eyes were distended with excitement and terror.

"Yes, oh yes! Have they caught him? The wicked old man! He did it. It was not the wagon. I didn't see him until it was too late. I saw his eyes glare right into mine, and then he struck. Oh, how it hurt, and then—I didn't know any more."

"That is enough, Frank." The detective shut up his note-book. "No; we have not found him yet, but we shall, never fear. You would know him, would you not?"

"Yes, sir; yes, I would know him."

Little Norton took from his pocket a picture, none other than an enlarged copy of the tiny likeness of the little old man taken by his detective camera at the door of the Princess Orloff's apartment.

"Did he look like that, Frank?"

"That is him! That's him, sir. He stood at the corner just like that; and that's his cane, and all!"

Little Norton placed another picture before him.

"And do you know *that*."

"Yes! yes. It's the boy. Oh, where did you get them?"

"Queer things happen sometimes, Frank. Would you like to see that boy?"

"Yes, I would. *He* didn't mean any harm. He didn't know that old man."

Confiding, honest childhood, full of faith in its kind.

Little Norton and Officer Bates left the hospital together, to separate outside its door and hasten in opposite directions, like men who were intent on urgent matters.

Before they separated, Norton put a key into his companion's hand.

"Here is the key of the room," he said. "Go straight there and get the bundle of photographs. You will find them already upon the desk. See that they are distributed, that every officer has one or sees one. Now, we have got something to work on. If we can catch that old fox, we can hold him."

"With these pictures to help us," said Bates, "it will be very strange if we don't run him in."

CHAPTER L

COUNTER-PLOTTING

Notwithstanding the fact that he had left the presence of madam la princess at an early hour, Captain Makofski did not return to the La Croix roof until it was nearing dawn.

A pale girl, sleepless and watchful at her window alone, saw him enter, and then threw herself upon her couch, burying her face in the pillow in an attitude of misery, never assumed by those who seek or hope for sleep.

The packet which he had entrusted to Moina, he found beside his breakfast plate. Moina herself did not appear.

"She had not slept very well," Margot explained. "And her head ached a little. She would be better soon."

Makofski glancing from the messenger to the packet in his hand, looked anxious and seemed inclined to ponder. Miles La Croix scarcely heeded message or messenger. He was full of another subject. When Margot, having served their breakfast withdrew, Makofski lightly touched upon his visit of the previous evening.

"After all it was nothing. A test perhaps, and more than all a desire to ask for information concerning a certain Russian—a friend who had been suddenly lost sight of, such things happen sometimes there. In fact there's little to tell. I gain this, however, I need no longer remain in seclusion. I think there is nothing to fear from Madam the Princess Orloff."

La Croix was satisfied with this and did not follow up

the subject. Instead he broached a subject of his own. To expedite matters he explained, he had sent for Lugas and Crashaw; he expected them soon and he meant to have everything settled—to have Makofski one of them without delay.

"You will meet with opposition," said Makofski, "but I leave all in your hands. Understand, that if I join you it must not be on sufferance. While I am willing to be of use among you, I do not beg the honor, and I confess no especial enthusiasm. I have no grievance."

Half an hour before the two revolutionists appeared upon the scene, Makofski, availing himself of his extended freedom, went out, "to stroll about the city and become acquainted with it," he said.

The interview between La Croix and his two visitors was a long one, and he did indeed meet with opposition, strong and well sustained up to a certain point.

Neither of the two displayed too much surprise or curiosity when told that the princess had sent for Makofski, and that the latter had obeyed her summons. And they went away leaving Miles La Croix well pleased with the result of the interview. They had made but one stipulation: There were certain matters in progress that must be completed before Makofski became one at their counsels. But as on other occasions the last word had not been spoken in the little room behind the studio.

Crashaw and Lugas walked to the little oblong park not far from the house, and there sat down.

"We may as well stop here," Lugas had said, "for one of us must go back."

"I knew there was something on your mind," said Crashaw. "Your—instincts are very reliable. There is something on my mind. I am going to see the princess. And you must go back to La Croix and get him to sign a

transfer putting the business we have in for a week hence, into the hands of another 'group.'

"What! He won't do it."

"He will if he knows that to refuse will be to keep his Russian friend out a fortnight longer. Come—you know how to manage La Croix."

Ten minutes later Moina La Croix, having seen Captain Makofski, Crashaw and Lugas leave the house, came down to the studio seeking her father. She pushed aside a heavy curtain and advanced to a tall screen which shut off her view of the inner door. Here she paused, startled by the sound of voices from the inner room. Then the words of the half-heard sentence suddenly shaped themselves into meaning. She drew closer to the screen and bent forward listening intently.

As soon as he had separated from Crashaw, M. Lugas hailed the first cab that crossed his path and drove straight to the hotel of the princess.

The card which he sent up to the room of that lady bore the legend:

"M. Lugas, Oculist."

And he added: "You may say that I have brought the eyeglasses that she wished to try."

If the Princess Sacha was displeased or anxious because of this visit, she did not suffer it to appear when M. Lugas entered the dainty reception room and bowed before her.

"To what do I owe this honor, sir," she said in the coldest of tones.

"Entirely to the fact that you saw fit to receive here the person who calls himself Captain Makofski."

"Well?" her eyes met him full. Her face was haughty. There was evident an open dislike in tone and look.

"You are undoubtedly willing to explain, madam?" he said.

She regarded him a moment in haughty silence. "If I had only myself to consider, I should give you, sir, a very short and decisive negative. As it is, and more for the sake of the gentleman whom you mention than for my own, I will say this; I had two motives for sending for Captain Makofski: first, and least, you are aware that Captain Makofski, upon his trial, never admitted his connections with the nihilists. I wished to apply a little test, for I could readily see that you would not lose much time in making an ally of such a man as he. Was I not right?"

"Perhaps. And this test of yours—did it succeed?"

"About as I had expected. I was never one of those who believed in the loyalty of the captain. I am confirmed in my belief. He was not what some of his enemies, even in the ranks of his chosen cause, would have made us believe; we need not hope to find an emissary of the Czar there, M. Lugas."

"I am glad to hear it. You spoke of another reason?"

"My other reason was strictly personal. There was a time when Captain Makofski knew one who—a friend. That portion of the interview which was of the deepest interest to me was concerning this person."

"And may I volunteer to hope that Captain Fernand Makofski was able to give you all the needful information?"

"All that he could tell was soon told. I was grateful for even so much. If I ever meet him again it will not be of my own seeking. And now is there need for any more words? I have identified him for you. Do you hope to find him useful to the cause?"

"Captain Makofski confesses to very slight interest in our labors, still he has permitted his new friend, La Croix,

to present his name. Madam, we would like your very frank opinion. We can find no reason for refusing to receive him. He is clearly identified with us, and, he is not a man to be kept out of anything once he is accepted among us."

"What is there that he need be 'kept out of?'"

M. Lugas turned and took up his hat.

"We need not enter into that," he said. "The only question after all is that of identity, but that has been set at rest. We accept him *upon the distinct recognition* of madam the princess. Whatever comes, madam, we *hold you responsible for this man.* And now I wish you good morning. It must be a matter of the gravest importance that brings me here again."

When the door had closed behind him she took a slow turn up and down.

"What does he know or suspect?" she muttered. "That man disliked me before, now he hates me. It is war between us from this day. Very good. I must be doubly on my guard now. And you, my friend 'Makofski,' is it hate or fear he feels for you? A little of both perhaps. I shall warn you my 'Makofski,' and forewarned you know."

When Rene Savareis came to pay his almost daily visit, he found the princess awaiting him. A note to Fernand Makofski, sealed and addressed, lay at her elbow.

She was somewhat preoccupied and made her wishes known like one not accustomed to question or contradiction. It was only after she had ceased speaking, and awaited his answer, which did not come readily, that she troubled herself to look attentively into his face. What she saw there caused her to grow grave.

"My friend," she said with unusual sweetness, "you are

tiring, I see, or playing the part of messenger. I have overtaxed your friendship."

"You know it is not that!" he burst out. "I have been glad to be even a postboy in your service, since it was between you and those you did not wish to receive here, but—" He flushed and stopped short.

"But you do not wish to be the bearer of a note to this man? Listen Rene. At a time less serious than this I might have answered you angrily. I can not afford to do so now. I need your friendship." He started suddenly, impulsively. "Wait. Let me finish. You know that I have identified Mr. La Croix' guest as Makofski the Russian captain?"

"Yes."

"Did you know that I sent for this man to come here last evening?"

"Yes. Another branch of my general utility. I am Rufus V. Crashaw's escape valve. I had it from him."

"From him? Ah, well, we will go back to that. I wonder if you know, too, that I was honored by a visit from M. Lugas this day?"

"From Lugas? No! Has he dared! When you told him—when you forbade his visits!"

"Nevertheless he came. He was much disturbed because I had received Makofski here, and we did not part amicably."

"Ah," he sighed, "I am sorry for that. That man is dangerous, vindictive. I believe that he hates you. Sometimes I think he fears you as well."

"Well you say he is dangerous, and yet you talk of deserting me now when—"

"No!" he broke in, "not that. I belong to you first, to the cause after."

She took up the letter and held it out to him. "Take that." And when he had complied. "Now listen. That

man and Makofski and I are *not* friends. We may in the end be enemies. In the meantime there is a secret between us, and Makofski *may* render me a great service. He is about to join the 'group,' I believe."

"Yes."

"I believe that Lugas—yes, and Crashaw—mean mischief. If any harm happens that we, that I might have prevented, Makofski will believe me to have been in the plot against him. Some day I will tell you why, and how. The *man* is nothing to me. The service he alone can render me is *everything*. I can say no more. Now will you serve me? Will you be my friend in need?"

Instantly he had dropped on one knee, in graceful, foreign fashion beside her and touched her hands with his lips.

"When Sacha Orloff needs a friend she will find that I can be something more than a transmitter of messages. I will take the letter—what more?"

"Resume your old habits; be often at the La Croix; try to know Makofski, and let him see that you are, if need be, on his side."

"To hear is to obey."

He arose in obedience to her gesture and resumed his seat. "Is there anything else?"

"No—yes; a question. You are, I know, in the confidence of Crashaw. Do you think you know him thoroughly?"

"Yes. Ever since my father's death he has assumed the position of mentor. I have been a plastic pupil. He has no reason to doubt me—neither he nor Lugas. If they knew the truth they might not send me to you so freely, upon all sorts of pretexts. I have been careful not to let them guess that it is you I serve in my heart of hearts."

"Ah, yes; you pass, clever Rene! I know, they even

half believe that you are secretly devoted to lovely Moina La Croix. I had just a glimpse of her that day. Let them still continue to think so, but there is one whom it may prove best to undeceive."

"Who is that?"

A queer smile crossed her face.

"Captain Fernand Makofski," she replied.

CHAPTER LI

BLUDGEON VERSUS CANE

Rene Savareis was as good as his word. Within a week he had resumed his old footing in the house of the La Croix. Wholly in the dark as to the motives of his fair commander, he yet worked her will and bided her time.

He found Fernand Makofski, viewed in the light of their last words, a very agreeable companion. Their acquaintance progressed wonderfully.

Moina too, welcomed him back among them. Since the night of his visit to the princess, there had been a change in her manner toward Makofski—a change to be felt rather than seen. She was more at her ease when Savareis made one of the number in the little drawing-room and this fact Makofski was not slow to perceive.

Long before La Croix' illness, it had suited the purpose of Rufus Crashaw to hint that he might find in Rene Savareis a possible suitor for his daughter. And the thought had pleased La Croix well. He had even hinted at it, in his turn, to his daughter. But Moina had only smiled in reply, and had remained as before upon the most friendly terms with Rene.

In a moment of hunger for human sympathy, Rene had told to Moina the story of his love for the Princess Sacha, and its too evident hopelessness. Having such knowledge, Moina could afford to be frankly friendly with Rene.

When Miles La Croix arose from his sick-bed the idea

of a future, shared by Moina and Rene, had remained with him. And for different reasons no one had cared to undeceive him.

With this thought in his mind and Rene once more an almost daily visitor in the studio and drawing-room, it is not strange that Miles La Croix should make it known to Makofski.

It came about quite naturally. Rene had just left them, after chatting an hour in the drawing-room with Moina and smoking a cigar in the studio, now the common haunt of Makofski and his host. Makofski had expressed his liking for the handsome fellow and followed it up by a request for further information concerning him.

"He's a sort of ward of Crashaw's," La Croix had said; "he was an enthusiast in the 'cause.' No, I never knew him well. But Rene has been much among us. Perhaps you have noticed that my daughter and he understand each other. Yes, I am getting old, and it comforts me to think that I shall leave her in such loyal, kindly hands, for it amounts to that. I have seen it from the first."

A long silence had followed this communication, and when Makofski spoke again, it was upon another subject. He did not linger in the drawing-room in the evening but when Rene came again he greeted him with more than his usual cordiality and found much to say to him. Indeed, from that time he found opportunities for being often in the young man's society. Something very like an intimacy sprang up between them. A close observer might well have fancied that the mysterious Russian was making a close study of Rene Savareis.

As for Rene, before he fully realized the strength of the influence—the magnetism exerted by Makofski—he was fairly under the spell. Something in his frank, spontaneous nature responded swiftly to the strong will

and force of character which seemed bent on drawing him to itself.

"I hope you have nothing very ugly in store for him, in the denouement," he said in the course of one of his verbal reports to the Princess Sacha. "I can't help liking the man, and I have entirely forgotten to distrust him. He draws one somehow."

"So you have felt that."

"Yes. Have you?"

"A little." A queer smile flitted across her face. "But not as you do. You have no need to be jealous, my poor Rene. A woman does not enjoy being thus dominated."

"You are a riddle to me," said Savareis with a sigh. "And so is Makofski."

And so thinking, he yet found himself day by day loving the one and admiring the other, and instinctively trusting both.

For two or three weeks after Makofski became identified with the revolutionists, all went smoothly, or so it seemed.

Miles La Croix grew daily more gracious to Rene, and more dependent on Makofski; Crashaw turned surly and kept aloof. Lugas, after a suitable interval of reserve, seemed to have been touched by the tidal wave of attraction setting so strongly toward Captain Makofski and began to unbend, to seek his society and to find pleasure in it.

As for Makofski, he received all this as a matter of course, as only his due, and met M. Lugas half-way at all points.

For two or three weeks following the murder of poor Harvey, the papers kept up a running comment on the case. Sometimes they reported the police as upon a hot

scent, only to modify or utterly deny the same in the next issue. Sometimes they theorized and sometimes they flouted the police. At last one morning this paragraph appeared: "After following up many false clues, working out and proving the impracticability of many therein, the police now believe, that the man Harvey, who was an Englishman, and who had only been a year in America, was murdered by an enemy who followed him across the water for this purpose, and who may, by this time, be en route for England. It is said that the police have abandoned some of the old trails, and a new search will be prosecuted on the other side of the water!" On the evening of the day that saw this paragraph in print, there was a counsel at Miles La Croix. The "group," after many days of inaction, had decided to resume the aggressive.

When the council broke up, which was not until a late hour, Makofski, who had been carrying on an animated discussion with Dr. Lugas, accompanied him to the vestibule entrance and looked out. The night was fine and he was not inclined to sleep, he said; besides, he had been indoors all day.

He took his hat, coat and slender cane and went out into the street with Lugas.

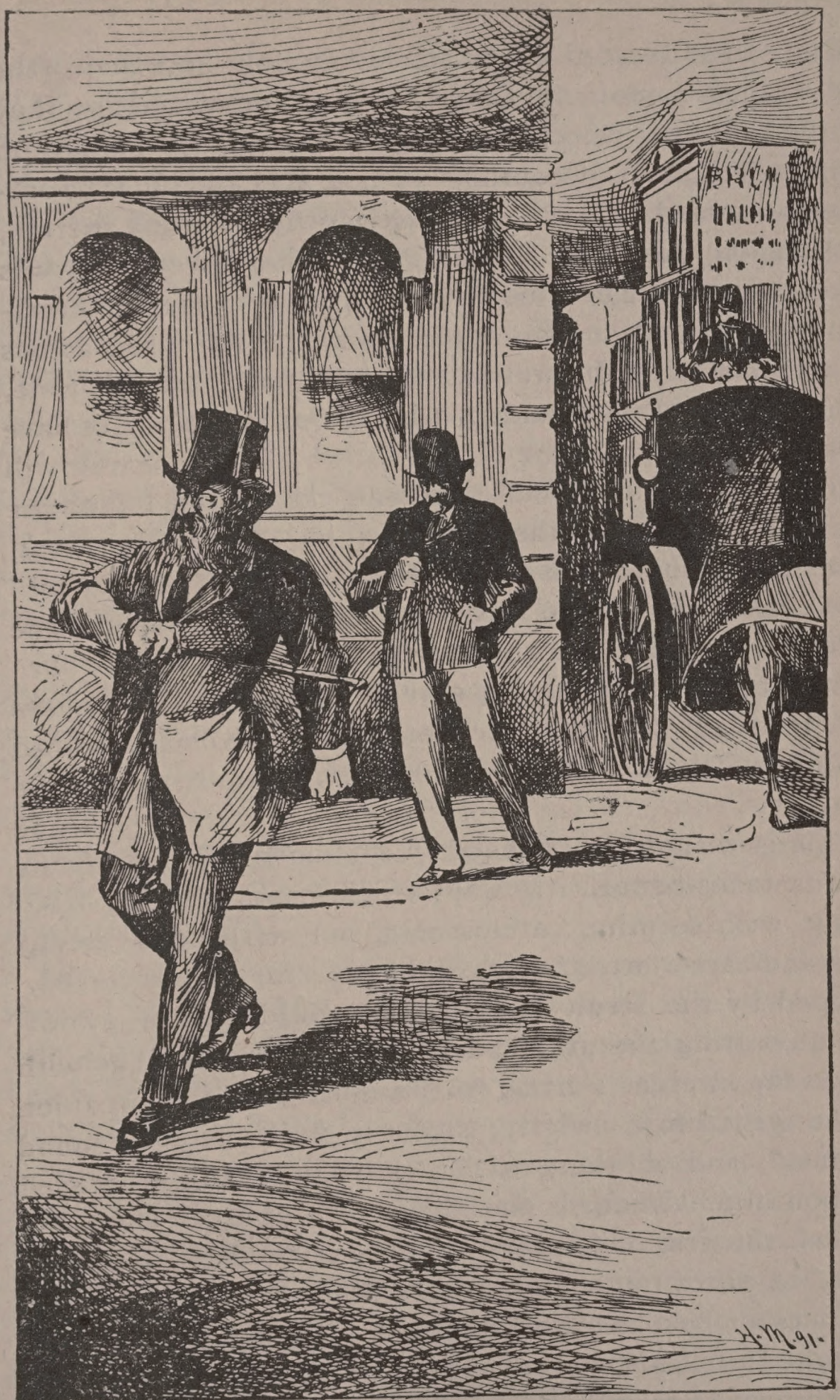
Crashaw and Rene Savareis had gone on before.

The two men went forward slowly, conversing with animation, Lugas leading the way, and his companion seemingly heedless whither he went, until they found themselves in a somewhat shabby and dimly lighted quarter, and Lugas himself called a halt.

"I am taking you too far," he said; "and this is not a pleasant part of the city. Can you find your way back?"

"Easily," replied the other with confidence.

And after a few more words the two separated, Makofski going leisurely back as he came.



THE ATTACK UPON CAPTAIN FERNAND.—Moina, p. 334.

The street seemed deserted. Only now and then was the stillness broken by sound or movement, but by and by the noise of wheels moving swiftly struck his ear—some belated cab of course—it came near and the rattling wheels seemed to revolve more slowly—arrived at its destination, perhaps. But no; the noise did not cease altogether. The cab came on slowly, slower yet, until just opposite him, at a point where two large buildings, one on either side of the way faced each other and blended their grim shadows, making a bridge of intense darkness where they fell.

Into this shadow, pedestrian and cab passed together. Then the rattle of the wheels told of an increased pace. Something shot forward in the darkness just behind Makofski. There was a dull sound as of a blow, a sharp exclamation, another sound—this time a blow unmistakably. Then the noise of running, a sharp but low call, the slam of a carriage door. Then wheels again, rolling swiftly now down the street, around a corner, away.

This is what has happened in a moment—in less time than it takes to tell it. Captain Fernand, walking listlessly, with seeming carelessness, but with head erect, eyes and ears alert, and grasping his slim cane reversed, gripped by the ferule end as one would grip a sword when awaiting the attack, hears a slight sound behind him. He swerves a little to the inner side just in time to receive a blow, swiftly, strongly dealt, directly upon the head, and another, with a cat-like spring some one is upon him. There is the gleam of a knife in the air.

Then the arm of Captain Fernand rises and descends once. A whizzing sound, a blow, a howl of pain. Then the pursuer becomes the pursued. The man who had thought to fell his victim with his iron-bound bludgeon, has thrown it from him and fled, a second blow from the

loaded cane falling upon him as he runs. The race is short. It ends in the cab which has stopped at the moment of attack. In an instant the fugitive is within, the whip descends, the vehicle is away. And Captain Fernand stands looking up and down the street alone—only for a moment however—only to make sure, first, that no cab is at hand, and that there has been no witnesses. And then he turns and without so much as a backward glance, resumes his homeward journey. There is no light visible when he reaches the house. None in the studio, none in the drawing-room. He goes quietly to his own room and having locked his door and turned on the light, proceeds to examine himself—first his garments. The light top-coat had a long cut in the breast near the shoulder. He examines the frayed edges critically.

"A keen blade," he mutters. "No common weapon that; it scarcely touched me—and yet—" He tossed the garment aside and held up his right hand. Across the back ran a long thin red line, from which the blood was oozing.

"And I never felt that," he said, wiping away the drops; "I wish he had spared me that; it will leave a mark for days."

He eyed it ruefully; it was only a scratch and yet it seemed to cause him actual annoyance. He went at once to his dressing-case and having washed the scarred hand, he dressed it carefully with a strip of plaster; then he removed the round-topped hat, which had been curiously indented by the blows dealt upon it. It did not look like a bit of armor; no one would suspect, viewing it from the outside, that it had perhaps saved a man's life. But on closer inspection you could see that it was lined with a framework of steel, fine but firm. This framework was deeply indented, but it had broken the force of the blow."

"Evidently," soliloquized Captain Fernand, "that attack was meant for me. It was no chance encounter, and my assailant, I fancy, has the worst of it. Bah! It was a bungling affair. But it has taught me to sleep with closed doors, and to be on my guard. I am greatly obliged to—some one."

It was past midnight, and a man after a long walk and an exciting encounter might well be expected to feel fatigued, if not sleepy. But Captain Fernand did not retire. He smoked a cigar instead and consulted his watch from time to time, like a man about to keep an appointment.

On the following morning, the chief of police found a note upon his desk, brief and signed only by a seemingly meaningless flourish. Its effect was to set all the available detective machinery in motion.

"Look for a physician or surgeon who since one o'clock this A. M. has been called upon to attend a man—probably small in stature, but very agile and muscular; who has a bruised or broken arm, shoulder or wrist, probably the right, with perhaps other hurts. Locate injured man if possible."

CHAPTER LII

A SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

While Captain Fernand smoked and pondered in his locked room, a light form glided down the passage, then started and hesitated a little as the gleam of light from above his door struck across her path. Only for a moment, however; there was no sound from within, and this was not the first time that Captain Fernand had been known to "burn the midnight oil," until midnight was long past. So Moina, after listening a moment, went swiftly on through the dusky passage. At the door of her father's study she paused again; all was still, the house seemed sleeping. She opened the door with the key she had taken from her father's room, and which she would replace when her search was ended, entered the room and in a moment had put her hand upon a small lamp placed there in readiness by herself. In another instant a light, dim but sufficient for her purpose, shone upon the desk, which she began to unlock with eager, trembling fingers.

She was not long in finding and examining the books. She had grown used to this now, although of late, since the introduction of Fernand Makofski into the "group," she had been deposed, and her place as secretary and amanuensis given to him.

"Ah!" she murmured half-aloud, with her eyes riveted upon a newly written page, "it is worse than I thought, far worse, and I am so helpless." She bowed her head upon her hands, and tears trickled through her fingers.

She was, for the moment, overwhelmed with a sense of her own weakness. Then she lifted her head and brushed away her tears. "I am one against them all," she said, "but I will not give up." She caught up a slip of paper and rapidly copied something from the page before her. Then she drew from her pocket a tiny bunch of keys she had taken from beneath her father's pillow that night, for the first time.

They fitted into sundry small drawers and snugly contrived compartments; as she applied them, one after another, her face grew firmer, and her hand more steady.

One by one she read the letters and papers, memoranda and notes, and carefully replaced each—read with a growing horror in her face but still resolutely.

She had reached the last drawer and was sitting with half a dozen letters before her on the open desk, when a slight sound caused her to start and look swiftly about her. The sound was repeated, and she bent hastily forward, blew out the light and with a swift spring reached the other side of the room farthest from the door, where a tall screen stood. She had only to move one panel slightly and conceal herself behind it, and even as she did so, she knew the door was opening slowly and that some one was within the room. The sounds made by the new-comer were slight, but Moina was alert, and listening with bated breath.

What did it mean? By standing very erect and slightly raising herself she could see through the fret-work at the top of the screen, and this she did.

And now the hot angry blood surged up and over cheek and brow. Fear gave place to indignation. She clinched her hands, bit her lips, and, for an instant, it seemed as if she were about to spring from her hiding-place and confront the intruder.

Standing near her father's open desk with a dark lan-

tern in his hand, its light, at the moment turned away from her place of concealment, and full upon the desk, stood Captain Fernand Makofski. He was looking about him in the coolest possible manner. But when he had swept the room with his dark lantern, his eye came back to the open desk and rested there, taking in everything: the letters lying thereon, the keys hanging in the lock last opened by Moina, the lamp lately extinguished and still emitting a faint smoky odor. He placed his hand upon the lamp, and knew at once that it had just been extinguished.

Seeing this the blood receded from Moina's face, leaving her pale again, but there was no sign that this fact had impressed him. He seated himself and began to glance at the letters, one after another. His eyes were keen and his hand was quick, and he had scanned and replaced three of the letters before Moina La Croix could decide upon any course of action. It was only when he had half risen and placed a hand upon the bunch of keys, that she suddenly dashed aside the screen and flung herself upon him like a young tigress, snatching the keys from his unresisting hand.

"So, sir," she panted, "is this the way you reward hospitality? A spy, a robber. What is the meaning of this, Captain Makofski. What right have you with those"—pointing to the desk and the scattered papers —you, my father's guest."

"Miss La Croix, will you explain your presence here?" he said.

"My presence! I, in my father's house?"

"In your father's study, at midnight, and in the act of searching his desk—the desk which contains not his secrets only, but documents, letters, memoranda of vital importance to others. These keys; I know he always keeps them about him; how did you obtain them? These

letters of a private nature, concern the business of the 'group,' of which your father is the authorized chief. You have called me a spy, Miss La Croix. What is your position? Painful as it is to say, I have a duty to perform in this house, because, as you have just reminded me, I am indebted to its master. You have chosen to call me a spy, Miss La Croix; be assured I am quite able to account to those who have a right to inquire into it, for my presence here. Are you prepared to explain yours; not to me—but to others?"

"To others!" Poor Moina. The wrath died out of her face; she began to feel suddenly weak and helpless—a very woman. "To others? To whom?"

"To your father. To Mr. Savareis. To all those whose secrets are here"—putting a hand upon the desk. "Ask yourself. As a man who would be loyal to his cause, can I pass in silence what I have seen here to-night?"

"I am here to-night, Captain Makofski, because I have learned from a hint not intended for my ears, that a certain man is to become the subject of your machinations."

"Mine!"

"Pardon. I should have said a sacrifice of the 'circle.' It's the same thing I want to save this man; I want to warn him; I have broken his bread. Some were in this desk, I believe; there was a memorandum of instructions, and his present address which I do not know. I was searching for these. Is that enough?" She lifted her face defiantly.

"Not quite. Tell me the name of this man?"

"The name of this man is Elias Lord."

"And why do you wish to protect this particular man?"

"Because I have accepted the hospitalities of his house. Because he is the friend of my friend. Because he has suffered enough at the hands of the 'circle.'"

"What has he suffered?"

"His life has been attempted, or so I believe."

He drew a quick breath.

"You have placed your life at my mercy, do you know it? For your own sake let me implore you not to show yourself to these men as you have shown yourself to me."

"What! You think they would dare harm me—me, Miles La Croix' daughter?"

"They dare more than you think. You, who have seen so much, have you not seen that your father is little more than a tool in their hands? If you will not be prudent for your own sake, for your father's sake have a care. The time may be nearer than you think when he will need you sorely." He caught up his flickering lantern; he seemed suddenly in haste to terminate the interview.

"It is almost morning, Miss La Croix, and I will be as good as my word. You and I now seem on divergent paths, but we are not enemies, I trust. Once more I entreat you to be cautious. Trust me to keep your secret, and believe me, in spite of appearances I am always yours to command. Trust me—try me."

The door opened and closed softly. Moina arose and groped again for her little lamp. Lighthing it, and looking dazedly about her, she gathered up and replaced the letters and memoranda, and leaving all as she had found it went back to her own room as softly as she came, wondering if the past half-hour with its strange events, had not been all a dream. But no, the light still gleamed above his door, as she glided past it, almost holding her breath.

Once in her room she pondered long and with fast beating heart as she recalled his words and hers.

"What must he think of me!" she murmured at last. "I called him a robber, a spy, and it is all so simple. He heard me and followed me!" And then, after a time, she added: "He was very generous."

"A failure and a success," said Makofski to himself as he locked himself in his own apartment. "At least I know now just what to think of Miles La Croix and his daughter. My position with reference to them is taken, and will be maintained. So she declares war upon us. A brave girl! A brave girl! As for Miles La Croix' famous desk, its secrets are yet to be mastered."

A strange soliloquy, surely. Having indulged in it, Captain Fernand seated himself, lit a cigar, and wrote briskly for a long hour.

CHAPTER LIII

A PASSING STRANGER

Captain Fernand was evidently not much impressed by his adventure with the would-be assassin of the bludgeon and the cab. He made no mention of it to his host when the two met at the breakfast-table next morning, although he might easily have done so, for Moina was absent, not even appearing at luncheon. Even when M. Lugas appeared, the two having agreed to meet that morning, he was still silent upon the subject. M. Lugas had proposed to bring and read to him sundry letters and reports from abroad.

Captain Fernand was developing an interest in the general aspect of the question. They spent an hour in reading and discussing the cause and its probable and possible progress in France and Germany. When Lugas arose to take his leave, Captain Fernand arose too. "I will walk with you," he said, "and perhaps as the day is so fine I can persuade you to lunch with me, somewhere down town."

But M. Lugas said as to this: "We will walk together by all means," he said, "but in an hour I must see a patient."

When they were a few paces from the house and sauntering along slowly, Makofski slipped his hand beneath the arm of M. Lugas.

"I have a little thing to tell you," he began, and then broke off suddenly to glance round at a small man of insignificant aspect and clad in rusty garments who had

just brushed against him rather forcibly. "Well, my man," he said brusquely, "what is it?"

"Eh!" The man looked at him dazedly and came to a halt.

"Do you wish to speak to me?"

"I?" The man turned a look of blank inquiry from Makofski to Lugas and back to Makofski again.

"You touched my sleeve," said Makofski impatiently. "What do you want?"

"I?" The man began a stream of voluble protestations. He had not meant to touch him. It was the big woman leading the child who had jostled him. He appealed from his accuser to Lugas, as if to judge, and continued to protest with his eyes upon his face.

Suddenly Lugas turned away, pulling Makofski after him. "Come," he said, "it's nothing; the fellow has been drinking but he's quite harmless, to judge from his looks. You'll have a crowd about us. Come along."

Makofski consented to turn his back upon the small man who fell in the rear.

"I am not so certain it was an accident," said Captain Fernand, once more taking his companion's arm. "And you might agree with me if you had heard what I was about to tell you."

"Eh! What is that?" asked Lugas eagerly; "what were you about to tell me?"

"Simply this. Last night after we parted, you and I, I was attacked on the street, by a man—a small man who followed me in a cab, and took flight in it after he had failed to lay me out dying or dead on the pavement."

"You don't think surely that the attack was meant for you?"

"Oh, there! that's the question; I feel that I ought to report to the police."

"The police!" M. Lugas started. "Then you have not reported it to the police?"

"You think I ought, I see, and perhaps you are right."

"Wait! You are going too fast. There are many things to consider. To complain to the police might make you a little too prominent. You would be required to give your name, your residence, your occupation and antecedents. In short they must have your biography and it must be satisfactory."

"I see," doubtfully.

"But that is not all. What is known to the police here is known to the newspapers, and then you are at the mercy of the reporters."

"Heaven forbid!" piously ejaculated Captain Fernand. When they separated which was soon, they had mutually agreed that said attack had been meant for somebody else, and that it should not be laid before the police.

As before, they parted at a corner, and as Makofski with a backward look and a wave of the hand turned to retrace his steps, some one brushed past him for a second time. It was a boy whose elbow grazed his in passing—a boy wearing a soft hat instead of a rusty cap, and with such coat as he possessed rolled into a bundle and carried under his arm.

He did not glance at Makofski, nor did that personage on this occasion seem at all disturbed by his manner. But as M. Lugas moved away, Captain Fernand might have seen if he had chanced to look after him, that the same gap in the crowd through which the affable physician vanished also swallowed up the boy with his coat beneath his arm.

Captain Fernand smiled behind his burly beard; walked back to the corner where he had parted from M. Lugas, and where a number of coupes were in waiting, entered one and was driven away.

CHAPTER LIV

AN AMATEUR'S REPORT

Early in the afternoon of the same day, Roger Drexel was standing alone before the large window of his down-town place of rendezvous. He looked thoughtful and somewhat impatient, and he was twisting a letter between his left thumb and fingers. The room bore traces of neglect. There was a coating of dust upon everything and the air smelled stale, as if it had been for days unopened.

"Odd," he muttered half aloud. "Ken is unusually prompt. "I hope this won't last much longer."

He seated himself after dusting off a chair with a month-old paper, and opened the letter which, since his entrance until then, he had held crumpled in his hand. It was signed with Kenneth Hosmer's initials, and it ran thus:

"Old head, what shall I do with J. P.? I fear he is getting beyond my control, is going to the deuce at a furious pace. He is, of course, out of work, and even you, I think would be satisfied with his present state of impecuniosity. They are literally penniless except for my help, and, of course, in my character of liberal fellow-worker, with but a few dollars laid by, I dare not do more than relieve actual need. Thus far I have obeyed instructions to the letter, but this can't go on much longer. I feel as if I were hounding a fellow-creature on to his own undoing. Parker grows sullen, morose, in fact unman-

ageable. He is seeing some queer people, too. And there are some circumstances that should not be communicated by letter. Can't you come out from your lair, your veil of invisibility and mystery, and give me one half-hour of communion in the flesh? Really old fellow I think it's best so.

"Answer at once—the old stand.

"Yours *in extremis*,

"K. H."

Drexel smiled as he read the last words and folded up the letter.

"That sounds like Ken. at his best," he thought. "He has caught on to something and is not half so despairing of his own abilities as he would make it appear. This business, after all, may have been good for him."

But here his reverie was interrupted by Ken. himself.

"Well, Roger, it's awfully hard on a fellow, but he's going to take you at your word. I will only ask one question: Does your work prosper?"

"It's more than good of you to take so much on trust Ken., but before I answer, I must ask—"

"Well?"

"Do you still think as we did the last time when we talked together?"

"Do I still think you were right and I was wrong? Yes, I think it—and with confirmation strong, and growing daily stronger. Drexel, you saved me from worse than folly, when you laid your commands upon me, and sent me out to see the monster face to face."

"I have sent you into the enemy's country, and it was right that I show you how dangerous he is. The thing I am fighting now—and the thing I ask you to fight with me is organized assassination."

"What!"

"A band of murderers, red-handed. They are many, and I am almost alone. I cannot tell you everything Ken., for the secrets of others are in my keeping. But I will tell you what I may. I will tell you this: the men who are gaining control of the revolutionary movement here and elsewhere, are plotting crimes that, if allowed to mature, will fill a nation with horror and cause innocent blood to flow."

For a long hour the two sat there, the one speaking in low, guarded whispers, the other exclaiming, questioning, wondering, scarcely able to contain his surprise, and growing, as the story reached its end, fairly aglow with excitement and enthusiasm and nervous energy. When the story was told and he stood confessed, plain Roger Drexel no longer, but Hurst the detective—that foreigner, whose praise had so often of old been upon the lips of his unsuspecting friend, the narrator leaned back in his chair and said:

"Now, four men at the least, a round dozen at the most, must be rendered harmless, in some way, before another month has rolled over our heads."

"Rendered harmless! but how?"

"Don't ask me! Somehow—anyhow. Four of these men—*the* four I undertake. It will be a struggle between us, but I do not despair of success. The others, if others there be, I shall leave to the police."

Suddenly he threw out his hand as if casting the whole subject aside.

"Let us say no more about this. Perhaps you can guess, now, what my interest in this Joseph Parker means. You wrote me a strange letter. Why?"

"Parker has been going from bad to worse," he began. "And of late I have kept very close at his heels. He has no longer the least doubt where I am concerned. I have more of his confidence than any one—much more

than even his wife, poor soul. But he still clings to his great secret. The secret that in some way concerns, I am confident, the brotherhood with which he was identified. Something lies heavy on his conscience; he lives in fear and dread of something, and it has driven him to drink."

"You think so?"

"Beyond a doubt. Now this is what I wanted to tell you. He has met some one lately whom he knew in one of his lodges and I've barely saved him from committing a piece of high-handed outlawry."

"So bad as that?"

"You shall judge. Of course, I did not come by this knowledge all at once. I had to manage him very carefully and profess to any amount of lawlessness on my own part. He had to get very desperate and very drunk in my society of course, before it came out. His pockets were empty and the rent was over due, and I thought it best, for once, to have no money. Then it came out. Somebody had asked him to waylay a man and assault him."

"Ah! The details?"

"Are there, briefly. There is to be a man, I don't know who, to be 'intimidated.' The plan was all arranged for us. We—Parker and I—were to post ourselves at a certain shadowy street-corner, and there await the coming of two men. One of these was to wear an unmistakable hat and a certain foreign-looking cloak—a sort of military cloak."

"Eh!" Drexel started suddenly and then said as the other paused, "Go on. It grows interesting."

"This hat and cloak were to be shown to Parker, so that he might be able to identify the parties. I was not to be let into that part of it."

"I see; go on," impatiently.

"The encounter might occur on any one of three nights, it was thought. Our instructions were simply to wait at this corner until our man appeared. In the meantime a cab was to be stationed close at hand, the driver to be a safe *man.*

"Yes, yes!" Drexel's hands were working nervously.

"According to our program our two men were to separate at this corner. He of the cloak and hat would go unmolested on his way, the other we were to follow and assault with bludgeons in a shady and quiet spot, of course, while the cab crept along at our heels ready to carry us safely away when the work was done.

"Well, go on man! Was this fine program carried out?"

"Not by us. I pretended to agree with everything, and when the time came we were on the spot, or near it. I had plied Joseph and mixed his drink in such a way as to make him a good deal more than half-sick. Then I volunteered to reconnoiter, leaving Parker in a convenient stairway. I came back to him with a fine story of policemen on the watch, reported an imaginary conversation, told him that our plan must have been in some way discovered, and got him off the scene of action before the man of the hat and cloak made his appearance."

"Ken," cried Drexel starting up, "when did this happen?"

"Night before last."

"And was that the first night of your watch?"

"Yes."

"And last night were you on watch again?"

"No. Parker had weakened, and did not show himself at the place of rendezvous. And this brings me to the business of my note. Knowing that the hour for the rendezvous was past, I left Parker for the night. When

I saw him again the tempter had done his work. The case must have grown urgent for the man came openly to his door, got him out of bed and into the street—"

"Stop—at what hour was this?"

"Between two and three o'clock this morning. As nearly as I could gather from Parker's talk, the man began by berating him for not being on hand the previous night, told him that our watch and alarm of the first night was quite needless and finished by making a new plan."

"A new plan?" eagerly.

"Yes. It is to be tried again in a different way. This time the victim is to be decoyed somewhere and attacked when quite at our mercy. It is a diabolical plot! What am I to do? Some man's life is in danger. How can he be saved—be warned?'

"Is the thing decided?"

"Quite."

"Kenneth," said Drexel, after a moment of silence, "you must carry this thing through."

"What?"

"If you mean to stand by me, *now is your time.* I am playing a desperate game and I *may* fail. But my plans are well laid. What I have learned through you and others, leads me to believe that this man Parker may prove valuable to me. Do not let him out of your sight. Don't interfere with him. Let him mature his plans, and agree to anything he proposes—only be sure and keep me fully informed."

"Old man," said Hosmer, putting his hand upon his friend's shoulder, "I see more clearly, moment by moment, that you are running into danger—taking a fearful risk, and taking it almost alone. Why not turn these men, these villainous ring leaders over to the

police and the public. Let *them* deal out justice. Can't it be done?"

"No. And if it could be, don't you see the sure result? Say we arrest these men, there is a great trial, a monstrous exposure, all the country is aflame and curious. Accused and accusers each have their following; suppose even that we succeed, that the men are condemned and punished, what do they then become in the eyes and memories of their diciples? Heroes! Martyrs whose work indeed may have fallen from their hands, but whose baleful influence goes on and grows and increases. No. That must not be! These men must be *crushed*, driven out ignominiously, made to drop their weapons and vanish into obscurity."

"Oh, you are right enough, "sighed Homer. "And so I must go on with the game; turn garroter. And how far must the game be played this time?"

"Until the end, or until the game is taken out of your hands. Lure your victim to the rendezvous and leave the rest to me."

"And you will be there, *yourself?*"

"Never doubt it. Never fear for that. Assuredly as your victim is there, I will be there too."

"Remember this, Roger. Parker is a giant in strength. Do not underate the power of this man. In the meantime—"

"In the meantime, Ken. Try to see the man who is urging him on to this. See him or learn his name. Double your vigilance. *It is most important.*"

CHAPTER LV

WHAT LITTLE HANS REMEMBERED

"Well, my boy, here I am at last. Have I kept you waiting?"

"It don't count Capt'n. I've done longer waits than this. I was here on time though."

It was early dark and the man and boy met and halted close beside the dark stone wall upon the shadowy corner of a quiet street. Not far from the hospital where little Frank Price was slowly drifting out from the land of the known.

The man was Roger Drexel and the boy was Johnny Deegan, the one-time boot black of Court and Laflin Corners.

"Now what have you to tell me?"

"*Lots!*" Johnny whispered shrilly in answer to Drexel's query. Dead loads, you just bet. We'll have to go som'ers."

"Come then." Drexel turned promptly and led the way down the street and into a little restaurant where hot sausage was supplied at all hours.

"We can talk comfortably here," Drexel said, conducting the boy to a secluded corner and calling for a heaping plate of the hot and odorous edibles. "Now then, Johnny. Talk first, eat later."

"All right boss, I've got it out of Hans."

"Good!"

"Yes, sir! He's told the whole business. It's that last fake of mine did it."

"What was your last fake?"

"Oh, a rackit I give him about an old codger as was arrested and locked up in a jug fer cracking a little chap's crown. I made him look as near's I could, like the old chap I seen on the corner, ye know, and Hans jest bit on it. Ye see he felt so good to think the feller was in hock, fer he was dead sure it must be him, that he finally braced up and told me the hull story. After that, Capt'n, it didn't take me so very long to persuade him that if he'd tell it to you, you'd see him safe out of it."

"Oh, so you want me to see him?"

"Well," helping himself to a smoking sausage, "that's fer you ter say."

"Tell me the story, Johnny. We can go to Hans' afterward, if it seems best."

Johnny's version of little Hans' story was unique, told as it was between bits of sausage and rye bread, and Drexel listened attentively and with few interruptions. When all was told, the two went together to the Bates College where little Hans was domiciled, and Drexel held his first interview with him, and gradually won him to talk freely, and to answer readily.

The boy was a singular mixture of shrewdness and innocence, and his story, the pathetic tale of a young child-life cut off from all childish pastimes and pleasures.

"All that is over, my boy," said Roger Drexel. And then seeing the boy's growing confidence in himself he approached the subject of his keenest interest. "I want you to tell me more about the things you did for the old man, Hans. What did you call him?"

"Tausig. But sometimes Gran, and some of the others, called him the 'Spider.'"

"Well, Hans, tell me all about Frank Price, the flower-boy."

Hans' face blanched.

HANS' FACE BLANCHED.—Moina, p. 354.

"Oh, sir, if you please—"

"Tut tut, nobody is going to blame you for Frank Price's hurt. You see I know all about it. How did you happen to be at hand that day you met him carrying the flowers?"

"Why, that just happened, truly, sir. I was hangin' about an' bein' so uset ter watchin' things, I s'pose that's how I happened to see the name on the basket."

"Yes. But how came you to be watching? You had the little bow with you, the one you left on the table with the flowers. Did they tell you to leave it there that day?"

"Why, sir—you see I had been tryin' to get it into the house for two or three days, and they was pretty mad 'cause I didn't git no good chance. And then that mornin' he said, the Spider did, that I got to do it that day, 'cause there was a party, and I could slip in behind somebody, and say it was somethin' dropped, if I was noticed."

"You are not to blame, Hans. Were you ever there before?"

"Once, one night, a good while ago, we went there—the Spider and Big Joe and me."

Drexel started and seemed about to ask another question then, "Go on," he said shortly.

"We went late; it was a dark night. The Spider had some tools an' keys an' things. We went round to the back door and the Spider got the door open somehow. There was a little door, ye know, like they have sometimes so's ennybody can't come right in."

Drexel nodded.

"Well, it was like that, an' the Spider got it open, and he made me git through and find the bolts and pour some oil on them, and then slide 'em back, so that Big Joe could come in."

"Didn't the Spider go in, too?"

"No, only as far as the door. Big Joe had a peek-a-boo."

"What?"

"A dark-lantern, ye know. He went inter the house and we waited outside until he come back again."

"How long did you wait?"

"Oh, it seemed a good while. The Spider got pretty fidgety."

"Now, Hans, I want you to think. What did they say—the Spider and Big Joe—before Big Joe went into the house?"

"Why, not very much. The Spider told him to go ahead. He told him about the stairs; and jest how to get to a room upstairs; and he says, 'everybody's away but him. You'll find it baby's job.' And I remember Big Joe swore and said, 'anyhow, it's the last job they'll get out of me.'"

"And afterward when Joe came back?"

"Then the Spider says, 'Is it done?' and Big Joe swore and says, 'Yes, le's get out of here quick.'"

For a moment Drexel sat silent and thoughtful, then:

"Tell me about this Big Joe, my boy," he said; "how did he look?"

"Oh, he was tall and strong, sir. As big as you or bigger; and he had good looking eyes, and lots of hair on his face."

"Did he have any kind of mark or scar?—think now—on hands or face?"

Hans pondered.

"Why yes, now I remember," he said. "There was a wart—or no, a mole. Gran said it was a mole; a big one."

"Where?"

"Right here." The boy rested one thin finger upon his temple just above the cheek-bone.

"Are you sure?" cried Drexel. "Was it on that cheek?"

"Yes. Jest there."

Drexel got up and walked to the window. There was a gleam. of excitement in his eyes, hidden behind the benevolent glasses which he wore always in meetings with Johnny Deegan.

"Ah!" he was saying to himself, "this is more than I expected. More and better. Can it be that this little Hans is to show me the way to the end of this miserable coil?" He turned suddenly and addressed himself again to the boy.

"Hans, your memory seems good. Try to think; when did this happen—this visit, this first visit of yours with the Spider and Big Joe, to that house on the avenue? In what month?" And then, as the boy hesitated, "Was it warm, or cold? Winter or spring?"

Hans brightened.

"I know, now," he said. "It was winter, the end of winter, 'cause there was a little snow that night, an' I caught cold, an' the next day it snowed again. And then it never snowed any more. It got warm and sunny right off."

"Ah!" said Drexel, half to himself. "I remember. That was in February."

Again he turned to the window and stood there for some moments, consulting a little book of memoranda which he drew from his pocket. Finally he came back to the boy, Johnny Deegan.

"Johnny, my man," he said, as if addressing a familiar spirit. "Won't you just run down into the back-yard there and see if by chance any one is hanging about the alley who ought not to be?"

Johnny was off at once, swelling with importance. He had not found the dialogue very interesting. Drexel

himself closed the door behind him, and then came close to Hans.

"Now, Hans, be quick. Let's get it over before Johnny comes back. Tell me about the next time you went to that house, after you left the flowers."

"Eh!" the boy started.

"There was a new door, you remember, and you had to be put through the transom. Who was with you that night?"

But now the boy sprang up, white to the lips.

"Oh!" he cried, "how did you know about that?"

CHAPTER LVI

CRASHAW'S LAST HAND

"And that is your last word, La Croix."

"It is, on that subject."

They were face to face in the old man's studio, La Croix erect in his long artist's gown, and Crashaw occupying a low chair and crushing his soft hat between his strong, ungraceful hands.

"I promised to speak with the girl, and I have done so;" La Croix went on. "She refuses utterly. She will not hear of it."

"She might," said Crashaw bitterly, if she knew it was your wish."

"Crashaw—" the old man flung down his brush with an impatient gesture—"have done with this! I told you I believed my girl had already chosen, but I was willing to present your suit, even to urge it. This I did. I might repeat her words; they were not pleasant; she defied me openly. For the first time in her life, my daughter defied me. Do you wish to see her? To hear from her own lips—"

"Yes," interrupted Crashaw at last. "I wish it if I may see her alone."

Crashaw was still standing when Moina entered the room a minute later and he faced her with something of surprise upon his countenance—something of satisfaction too.

"You wished to speak with me?" she said icily.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I wished to see you, to ask you why you will not even listen to me?"

"Since you insist upon having it—because your company, your conversation, was not agreeable to me."

"Your father has been good enough to hint to me, that Rene Savareis was, in your eyes, a better man than I."

A swift change came over her face. The waves of scarlet, the blaze of anger, receded. She became suddenly calm and a smile relaxed the corners of her mouth.

He noted the change and stopped abruptly.

"Well," he said finally, "have you nothing to say?"

"Nothing," she replied composedly.

"You confess then, that you prefer Savareis—that he stands beween us."

"The whole world, and all in it, stands between us, Rufus Crashaw. As to Rene Savareis, yes, I do prefer him to you infinitely."

"And you believe in him of course?" he sneered. "I think you may have heard of Madam Orloff."

"Madam La Princess Orloff? I have seen her, and am not jealous of her."

"If your answer to night had been different, I need not have pained and troubled you as I now must." He paused and looked at her fixedly, and then said abruptly: "You are impatient. I will come to the point. Your father, Miss La Croix, is in great danger."

"Of what?"

"As a murderer."

He has roused her at last. She turned upon him with blanched face. "Man, you are vile if you are saying this to terrify me!"

He forces back a triumphant smile; at last his moment has come. She will listen to him now.

"I wished to spare you," he said smoothly. "But no more of that. Do you remember a night, weeks ago,

when your father went out, alone and late, for the first time after his illness?"

She caught her breath quickly, and suppressed the cry that arose to her lips.

"I see; you do remember it," he said.

"Go on," she whispered. "What is it?—the worst."

"You were hardly yourself for some days after," he went on relentlessly. "That night, the night of your father's mysterious absence, there was a murder, so called, in a house on Fifth Avenue."

She uttered a shrill cry and sprang to her feet, but he put out his hand and something in his look and gesture checked the mad words that arose to her lips.

"Wait," he said, "hear me out. You know of that midnight excursion. You know of the catastrophe of that night. And you in some manner connected the two. How you came by that connecting link, I confess I do not quite understand. I must ask you to tell me all you know of that business. It is best that we understand each other."

But Moina had recovered herself. She was on her guard once more.

"When I have heard what you know of that night, perhaps," she said quite firmly. "Certainly not before."

"As you please. Your father was seen to go to that house on Fifth Avenue. The murder occurred, so the coroner's experts decided, at or near twelve o'clock. It was just a few minutes later that he was seen to leave that place."

"Who saw him?" gasped Moina. "Was he followed? Was he spied upon?"

"He was seen; that is sufficient. And now for your statement."

"I will make it as you made yours. I have acted as my father's secretary. I knew that the name of this man, whose house you say he visited, was on the list of the

enemies of the 'circle.' I drew my inferences. What does all this lead to?" she asked wearily.

"I want to throw these spies off the track and insure his safety, that is all. And this cannot be done without your help. He does not know that he is being watched. We thought it best for many reasons that he should not. Do you not agree with me?"

"He must not know," she answered quickly.

"Then he should be got away from this house as soon as possible."

"But if we are watchful—"

"We must use strategy. Another house must be taken, and this time, a detached house in an exclusive quarter of the city, or else a very humble tenement in a crowded section will be best for our purpose. You understand me—your household must either be more aristocratic than at present, or much humbler, and it must number more people or less."

"I see."

"When the place is chosen all must be done quietly. "This place, I believe, was taken—furnished?"

"Yes, or nearly so."

"Well your belongings must be left behind. And this house must be retained—for awhile. Last, you must go away from here one at a time, and as if you were soon coming back. Your father, of course, must be the first to go. You would do well to remain here, at least to be seen here for two or three days after. And your servants—they had better be dismissed and others taken."

She was silent a moment, then, "Has this matter been discussed with the others?

"With Passauf, Lugas and Savareis, yes."

"Have you spoken to my father?"

"I have already told you—no. I wished to consult you first." He arose and took up his hat.

"I will not trouble you longer," he said; "remember this change cannot be made too soon." He moved toward the door. "Can I serve you in any way?"

"No." This quickly, as an odd look crossed her face. "Yes, if you will please send M. Savareis to me. Tell him I wish to see him to-night, if possible."

He frowned in spite of himself, but answered promptly:

"I will see him at once. But I must warn you. M. Savareis does not know why we are seeking to remove your father from this house."

"Not know? I thought—"

"He thinks our meeting here has been reported to the police. The truth is known only to you, myself and two others."

"And they? who are they?"

"I am not at liberty to inform you," he said and bowed himself out.

CHAPTER LVII

MOINA ASSERTS HERSELF

Rufus Crashaw was as good as his word, and Rene Savareis appeared in Moina's drawing-room at an early hour.

They talked over the projected change, and she found it as Crashaw had said. He was quite ignorant of the real reason rendering it necessary. They talked of her father too. And Moina spoke of him to Rene freely as she did to none other.

"Oh, I believe you have guessed it—have seen it yourself! Rene—do you think, can it be, that my father is gradually becoming—insane?"

Rene shook his head.

"I wish I were qualified to answer that," he said.

"But you have thought of it. Rene, if that should happen, oh, I could not bear it! And you don't know, even you do not know, how much I have borne and am bearing!" And then she broke down utterly.

"Promise me this, Rene," she said, when she had grown calmer—"promise that you will be more than ever my friend, Rene—that you will stand between me and that man, Crashaw. He thinks—" She stopped, blushing hotly.

Rene smiled reassuringly.

"He thinks we are lovers," he said lightly, "and let him think so. It may make it easier for you. I suppose you know the plans for your removal?" he asked.

"In part. All has been decided for us, I dare say."

"Subject, I suppose, to your approval and that of your father. I think they are very good—the plans. You are to keep this house and leave your old servants in it, employing new ones for the new quarters. The house is to appear as much as is possible as if you were all here as usual."

Moina started. "But Margot," she said—"I will not leave Margot."

"She can come to you after a little," he said soothingly; "and she will have the others with her."

"No, she will not. We keep but two servants here, and the cook goes home at night."

"Then you must get a new woman at once. One who will stay here with Margot."

"Ah," sighed Moina; "if Margot were not so much of a foreigner. If I only had some one—even a servant who was not as much their servant as mine."

"Stay," said Rene, his face lighting up, "I have an idea. You shall have just such a servant easily, through the princess, or if you prefer it, through Miss Payne. I can see one or the other. What do you say?"

Moina was thoughtful for a long moment. Then she lifted her head, a new light of determination shining in her eyes.

"I am going to fight hard for my emancipation," she said resolutely. "Luckily they have not begun to choose my servants. I want an honest woman who will obey me and none other—one who is used to hardship and is not nervous or timid. I will write a letter and you may take it to Miss Payne. Ah!" her face suddenly clouding, "I wish I could be sure I was not plotting against my father. But if he is planning to deliver me over to Rufus Crashaw, I can never forgive him."

"For heaven's sake, Moina, "for your own sake," said Rene earnestly, "don't lose faith in your father! As

God hears me, I believe him to be as much a victim in the hands of the Philistines as yourself.".

But when Moina, startled and surprised, attempted to question him, he would say no more.

Early the next day, Rene was in consultation with the princess; and before his outgoing feet had crossed the threshold of the Occidental, she, in her turn, was closeted with Madeline Payne.

The result of these two interviews is embodied in the following note written and promptly dispatched to Roger Drexel or to his address.

"MR. HURST, *Dear Sir:*—I have just sent my maid, Minna, to Miss La Croix, who has appealed to me in a somewhat roundabout way, for a servant. The request came by M. Rene Savareis, to madam la princess, and from her to me.

"I have explained to madam that I intended to take back my old French maid, and that this opportunity for disposing of Minna is quite welcome to me. Minna will be with me at eleven o'clock to-morrow, and will receive instructions, if you have any to give. She *is to be trusted.*

M. P."

CHAPTER LVIII

SECTION NUMBER FIVE

It was not hard to persuade Miles La Croix to consent to a change of residence. Especially as he found Moina and Savareis in favor of the change.

But Crashaw's plans were not the only ones that worked with wondrous smoothness. Rene Savareis brought Minna boldly into the house and she was at once accepted by Moina.

And now all was ready for the flitting of the household. At early dark Moina and Minna go forth on foot and with nothing about them to indicate a permanent departure. They are not to go to the new house that night —Moina's rooms are not ready to receive her—but they are to occupy, for the night only, snug rooms at a little hotel not far from the new abode; when they are a few blocks from the door, Rene Savareis joins them, puts them into a cab, and escorts them thither.

"You are sure papa will go to-night?" Moina asked anxiously, when Savareis is about to take leave of them.

"Oh, no doubt of it. You see it is all arranged like this. Soon, say in half an hour from this, your father will drive away in a cab, in company with Crashaw. In an hour or two he will return—that is the same cab will return, and two men will get out but this time it will be—whom do you think?"

"Oh, I can't think!"

"Makofski! He is nearer your father's height than any of the others and he will wear your father's cap and

cloak. The two will enter. Meantime Margot will have lighted the house as if for company, and, to make the assumption of the host's presence more complete, Lugas and one or two others will arrive shortly—and remain, probably, until quite a late hour."

Moina had become suddenly pale. Under her long cloak she is pressing a clinched hand hard against her side.

"And you, Rene—are you—to go back?"

"Not I," Rene laughs lightly. "I am quite at your disposal, if you will have me—"

"Oh, no, no! Go back, Rene. We shall be quite safe and comfortable. Besides—"

"Oh, I shall not go back. I do not want to; and I am not wanted. If you dismiss me I shall hover about not far away, and be at hand to assist you to your new abode in the morning. Those are my instructions."

Still the hand at her side is clutching at her side; but she steadies her voice and manages to dismiss him with the assurance that she needs nothing, and means to retire early. But when she is shut up with Minna in the two little rooms they are to occupy for the night, she will not remove her cloak and goes hastening up and down with nervous, unsteady steps and face studiously turned away from the discreet Minna.

"Minna, do you know the city well?"

"Somewhat, gracious fraulein!"

"Do you know where we are now?"

"Truly, no. I did not notice—much after we entered the cab—but—I can find out very easily. It is only to ask at the office. That would be quite proper—for me."

"Minna," the girl turns and extends an eager hand toward her new maid. "You may find out, very discreetly, our location; how far we are from B— street—

and how long it would take to drive there in—in the morning."

The program, as outlined by Rene Savareis, is not carried into execution with exactness. Miles La Croix goes with Crashaw but he does not come back with him, or his counterfeit presentment does not. Instead Crashaw returns alone and soon, and is promptly admitted by Margot.

"Margot, my good girl," he begins affably, "your master has thought better of leaving you alone in this big house to-night. He wishes you to take this card and go to the place at once. You will find a room already engaged for you, and you can pass the night there very comfortably. In the morning you will return here and attend to your duties as you have been directed."

Margot looks at the card and her face brightens. She knows the place indicated on that bit of pasteboard; a trim little cafe only a little way down a side street and kept by a cheery widow. She thanks M. Crashaw with many smiles and mentally blesses her master for his thoughtfulness, and goes at once.

Left alone, Crashaw looks around and finds something amiss.

"Confound it," he growls, "I forgot to tell her to light the drawing-rooms." He consults his watch, then adds, after a moment's reflection, "It can't be helped now. Perhaps it is better so. At any rate the way is clear and I must let them know it."

His cab is in waiting, he enters it and drives away.

Nearly an hour passes by and then another carriage comes swiftly to the door. From it one man alights, crosses the pavement and opens the door with a latch key and enters the vestibule. All is still within and the dim light reveals that it is Crashaw once more. Leaving

the outer door wide open he crosses the pavement and says just a word with his face at the carriage window, then he goes back and three others emerge from the vehicle and disappear within the vestibule.

"Come in," says Crashaw from the inner hall. "The drawing-room has been locked by that confounded woman that I sent away; but we can light up the studio. It will do for us until the others come."

Another half hour passes and the carriage which carried away Miles La Croix and his companion draws up to the door.

At the sound of the wheels some one steps out.

"Is that you, La Croix?" calls Crashaw from the top-most step. "Glad you're back."

The two last arrivals go into the house quickly. It is Crashaw who closes and locks the outer door.

Then the three confront each other in the hall.

Captain Fernand throws off Miles La Croix's hat and cloak and tosses them down.

"There, gentlemen," he said carelessly, "that little masquerade has passed unchallenged, let us hope that any spy, who may have been on the lookout, rests in the faith that he has seen our friend La Croix safely under his own roof; and now—" glancing from Crashaw to Lugas, "what is the nature of this conference of yours, and where is it to be held?" He moves toward the drawing-room but Crashaw puts out his hand.

"It's locked," he says, "and the studio is a poor place for such a talk as ours. Is there not an upper room, captain? Any place will do, so that its windows are not open to observers."

Captain Fernand turned the handle of the drawing-room door, in spite of Crashaw's words.

"It's odd that the drawing-room should be locked," he says. And then the smooth voice of Lugas interposes.

"There's the study—"

"No," says Captain Fernand, with sudden decision, "we will go up to my own chamber. The study, no doubt, is locked also," as indeed it is, and the key thereto safely reposing in the captain's pocket, a trust from Miles La Croix. "I will light the way for you," he adds.

And while Crashaw and Lugas at the foot of the stairs exchanged significant glances, he goes up, and they hear in a moment the snap of a parlor match and see a light flash up in the hall above them.

"It's the very place!" whispers Crashaw; "in the middle of the house and—"

"Hush," murmurs Lugas.

The captain is speaking from the floor above. "You can come up at once, gentlemen."

Then they hear a key turned, a door opened, and again, faintly, the sound of another match.

With a bound like a cat, Crashaw is at the outer door which he opens quickly.

"Go up," he whispers, "and say that Passauf has just joined us."

Then as Lugas ascends the stairs he closes the door with a bang and darts at once into the studio. "You have just arrived, remember," he says to the three men seated within. "Follow me, all is well."

The chamber is lighted when Lugas enters, and the captain is busy closing the blinds and drawing together the long soft curtains. There are two windows opposite the door of entrance, and at the one side is a second door, before which hangs a heavy drapery.

"Ah," says Lugas, looking about him. "You have room enough here." Then he crosses to the window where the captain still stands, draws back the curtain and looks out. "Why how do you face?" he asks as if in surprise.

"South, and a dead wall," is the captain's careless answer.

"Better and better," says Lugas to himself, and then he comes away from the window. "Wasn't that the street door?" he asks.

"Probably," answers the captain.

And then through his own open doorway comes first Rufus Crashaw, next Jules Passauf, and last two burly strangers, who enter somewhat awkwardly and halt at the door, while Lugas comes quickly and greets them by names that are strange to Captain Fernand, and expresses his delight, "That at the eleventh hour they have decided to come." And then Captain Fernand is made aware that the presence of these two new-comers has been solicited, despaired of, and is at last most welcome, after which they are duly presented. If Captain Fernand is in any way disturbed, surprised, annoyed, there is nothing to indicate it. He receives the new-comers with the utmost coolness and then draws the table forth from the wall and brings forward other chairs.

The two strangers, stalwart, dark-browed men, are not quite at ease sitting at the captain's table. They have little to say at first, and their eyes are often and stealthily fixed upon the face of Captain Fernand.

If they are ill at ease, he is not, and if he is aware of their covert scrutiny he makes no sign.

And now they are all seated at the little table; Lugas with Crashaw and Passauf on either side, sitting opposite the captain, who, singularly finds himself seated between the two bushy strangers. There is a momentary silence as all settle themselves in their places. Then Captain Fernand says:

"Gentlemen, I have placed my quarters at your disposal; pray consider me as host no longer, simply at your service.

Dr. Lugas bows gravely and glancing about him, Captain Fernand sees a look of gloom settle suddenly upon the faces of his five guests.

"Captain Makofski," begins Lugas, "in coming here to-night, and in what we are about to do, we are acting, not as we would, perhaps, but as we must. We are here in obedience to our oath as embodied in section number five.

A change comes over Captain Fernand's countenance. He moves suddenly and then, as the men on either side of him turn toward him, he drops back into his former position and bows to the men opposite him, meeting their gaze squarely the while.

"Ah!" the icy, upward inflection says more than many syllables.

Dr. Lugas takes from his pocket a slender folded document and lays it upon the table before Jules Passauf.

"The secretary of our committee will read the charge," he says. Passauf takes the document, spreads it out before him, and reads it with mechanical correctness.

It is an exceedingly funereal document, and the words "whereas" and "insomuch" and the phrases, "the council decrees" and "by order of the council," are frequent upon the page. It ends as follows:

"And it is the judgment of the council, that, because of circumstances and conditions, known and understood by all the members of the Inner Circle and the Supreme Council, this investigation be carried out privately by the committee chosen, which committee will consist of five or seven members of the Inner Circle who shall also belong to the Supreme Council. And the result of this same shall be reported at a private and special session of the council aforesaid.

'All of which reduced to plainest language means that Captain Fernand Makofski has been denounced by some

party or parties unknown, as a traitor to the cause he has so recently espoused, and that he is now to be 'tried,' by the five men who have taken him by strategy a prisoner, as he well understands, in his own quarters."

"Captain Makofski," says Lugas, breaking the silence that has followed the reading, "have you anything to say?"

"At this stage, nothing; except that your method, as well as the time and place is, to say the least, peculiar. I may have more to say when I have heard your charges."

His voice is highly scornful. He leans back in his chair and lets his eyes rest lightly first on one and then another of the group. "Probably," he adds, as no one is in haste to speak, "you have at least gone through the form of drawing up specific charges."

It is Lugas that answers. Evidently it is with Lugas with whom he has to deal. The eyes of the two men meet and neither falter. Those of Lugas are steely, cold, as his voice is unmoved and matter-of-fact.

"The charges are certainly specific," he says, "and they can be presented verbally. If you are able to clear yourself, so much the better, we shall all have cause to congratulate ourselves."

Makofski merely nods his head.

"Why don't you put your question?" growls Rufus Crashaw without looking up from the table where his eyes for the most part have rested.

"I was about to do so. Captain Makofski and gentlemen of the committee attend, please. Captain Makofski you are accused of thwarting the plans of the 'council.' Of giving information to the enemy, of coming among us for that purpose."

All eyes are turned toward him now. But his answer seems slightly disappointing, to judge from the look upon four of the faces.

"Of course you are prepared to prove this?"

"Then you do not deny it?"

"I do not chose to waste words now. Proceed. Upon what do you base these assertions?" He has not once changed his position; his attitude is as easy and careless as at first. But his eyes meet and hold those of his chief accuser who draws himself back slightly as if to brace himself anew for the struggle.

"I will not enter into details," began Lugas, "unless it is by your desire. The chief accusation is this; that you have introduced yourself into the household of Miles La Croix, and ingratiated yourself with him, until, by some strong, and undue influence, you have drawn from him secrets of the organization which should never have gone beyond the hands of the executive—the council. That he has made you his confidant and so placed our society and all its interests in jeopardy, we—"

"Stop." Makofski's voice was lifted and is taking on a sterner tone.

"Then it is not I alone who am accused?"

"There is no other."

"Answer me. Has Miles La Croix been accused?"

"Miles La Croix is our chief."

"Perhaps you wish me to think this outrage is authorized by him?"

"There are certain things," says Lugas slowly, "which M. La Croix puts quite out of his hands. These investigations, for instance."

A moment Makofski looks into his eyes in silence, holding his glance, while a strange, slow smile curls his lips, then—"You are an able man Dr. Lugas," he says quietly. "If only you had supporters like yourself—" and he casts a glance of open scorn upon the men on either side. "Permit me one more question. Does Miles La Croix

know that I am here, entrapped in his house, and on trial to night?"

One of the strangers starts suddenly. "What's that!" he asks.

"What do you mean," demands M. Lugas.

"That sound—I heard something."

Lugas glances swiftly over at Captain Fernand, but the latter sits unmoved and indifferent. Then he turns to Crashaw:

"Are you sure there is no one here?" he asks sharply.

"No one except ourselves," replies Crashaw impatiently, "what you heard was a noise outside in the street."

"It didn't sound so," avers the man who had heard the sound. "Didn't you hear it?" turning to Passauf. But Passauf shakes his head. He never wastes words.

"Crashaw's assurance is quite sufficient," he says and turns back to Makofski, resuming as if there had been no break in their dialogue:

"Since you have been here," begins M. Lugas slowly, "three separate pieces of work, all planned here, and fully known to Miles La Croix, and to no one else under this roof, have been brought to naught. It is impossible that any one outside of this house could have betrayed them, because they certainly were only known to the Chief of Council and to two others who are beyond suspicion."

"And who, no doubt, I see before me," bowing ironically to Lugas and then to Crashaw. "Since you are fully convinced that I am familiar with the 'pieces of work,' you of course will not hesitate about going into details."

"I will refresh your memory. It is quite safe to do so," with a significant glance around the table. "Nearly six weeks ago, the mills of a certain man were to have been exploded. The plan was perfect."

"Really, and it failed?" in a tone of polite interest.

"And it failed. The men who went to do the work found every avenue guarded. The next morning this brief notice appeared in the newspaper,"—he leans across the table and pushes a small newspaper clipping toward Makofski, who takes it up and peruses it with much apparent interest:

"To Whom It May Concern: The owner of the golden fleece mills would inform the persons, who last night made an attempt on his property, that they are marked men. Let us alone, is our motto. Hands off gentlemen. Nothing else will save you."

"Very interesting," he comments; "is there anything more?"

If he is seeking to arouse the anger of his icy-faced opponent, he is not succesful. The man takes up the slip replaces it in a small pocket-book and resumes: "Less than two weeks ago it was decided that a heavy blow must be dealt the enemy. It was determined that two men in high positions and of great wealth must be so dealt with that they could work us no ill. Through them all the other men organizing against us were to have been warned and intimidated."

"A double removal, you mean—we are not squeamish here, M. Lugas. Well?"

"Well, as you know, *this* scheme failed. Those two men were warned. It was impossible to reach them." He pauses again and puts away the pocket-book, which has remained in his hand, with the air of a man who has made an end to something.

Fernand Makofski draws close to the table. His face has suddenly grown very grave and stern.

"Is that all?" he asks.

"Is it not enough?"

"Answer me. Have you other charges to bring?"

"Only that which naturally follows this one. That of being a spy in the camp, a traitor to our 'cause.'"

Instantly Makofksi throws back his head and draws himself erect. "*Now*" he says, "let us understand each other. Let us waste no more words. You have chosen to accuse me, to try me without a hearing. I know you and your order well enough to know what that means. Already you have condemned me! Stop!" as there arose a movement as if in dissent above the table. "You would never talk thus freely to a man whom you expected to see go out from this room alive and free. What mode of execution have you chosen?"

He is leaning across the table and toward Lugas, as he speaks, and his eyes have suddenly become very alert. The two men on either side of him have drawn back a little and are intently watching his face.

"You mistake," said Lugas, still coldly calm, "we offer you terms."

"Terms! You!"

"Yes. What we ask is that you leave this country and at once. You will be safe enough in France. If you will promise to remain here until morning, under guard, of course, and as a prisoner, and to leave by the next steamer, seeing no one meanwhile but your guards; we ask no more."

"And my guards; who are they?"

Lugas turned his gaze toward the two strangers:

'I thought so." .He makes a sudden backward movement, pushes aside his chair and stands erect before them.

Afterwards, as they think of it, it seems to them that his two hands have all the time been visible upon or near the table, but, as he draws himself erect, they see a revolver gleaming in each, and those nearest him note that a tiny drawer in the table is half open. One of the weapons is aimed at Lugas with the swiftness of lightning, or so it seems to them.

"If one of you move, I will shoot down your leader!" he says grimly, "You have had your little half-hour; I am about to have mine! You are going to execute judgment on me, but I have something to say first. If you meditate any harm to that old man who is made your blind tool in so many things, you will live to rue it. For myself I scorn to deny your charges. But for that old man, I declare, *I swear*, to you, that no hint of these plots of yours has ever passed his lips; nothing, *nothing!* He is only too loyal to the cause he has idealized in that poor half-turned brain of his. As for me, don't fancy that in anything I am your dupe! Do you think that I do not know that from this moment, although I may go out from here free, I am a doomed man? I have seen the vengeance of the council reach across oceans and continents. I know that, to you at this moment, unless I can clear myself of these charges, I am *already dead!* Unless I can bring before you the one who has betrayed your foul secrets, if they have been betrayed, an assassin lurks for me at every corner."

With the glistening weapon still pointing at his head, Lugas rises and faces the man at bay.

"Can you bring forward the betrayer then?"

No answer.

"He must be self-confessed, mind. Are you able to *prove* that another and not yourself has denounced us in these three instances? Can you?"

Still no reply, only scorn in eyes and on lips.

"Will you?"

"*No.*"

"*But I can!*" A voice rings suddenly behind him. "*And I will!*"

CHAPTER LIX

VINDICATED

The curtain behind them was suddenly swept aside, and there in the open doorway, the darkness of the room behind her making a weird background for her plea, strained, beautiful face, stands Moina La Croix.

"I can tell!" she says again, and sweeps forward, and stands at Makofski's side.

Even then, startled and pale though he is, Fernand Makofski keeps his hold upon his weapons, keeps his aim sure.

They are all upon their feet now, but she does not heed them.

Her eyes are fixed upon him.

"It was I who betrayed you," she cries. "I, Moina La Croix! This man is innocent. It was I who did it!"

"Miss La Croix, Moina, for heaven's sake cease!" cries Makofski.

"Don't stop me. There must be no more room for doubt. My father is not to blame. He never meant to betray the secrets of your wicked council. But he talked in his sleep, and I sat by his bedside, night after night and listened. By and by I found that he would answer me so, and when he began to talk upon a certain subject, I led him on, and he never knew."

"Moina! Oh, hush! Do you not see—"

"You must not stop me. I must tell all quickly. I wrote to these men whom you meant to injure or destroy. I wrote in such a way that they must believe me.

Don't you understand? This man is loyal to your murderous order. I wish he were not."

In some emergencies thought takes the place of words.

While Passauf and the two strangers stand aghast, Crashaw and Lugas each leaped to a conclusion—that Crashaw is for Moina, or rather for himself as she represents his interests. "She must be saved from the consequences of her folly." That is what he assures himself, and in the same instant Lugas is thinking: "We have made an enemy. This blunder must be repaired." The two men exchange a few swiftly whispered words.

But Moina has not yet spoken her last word. She sees the two strangers range themselves near the door opening into the hall, and then as Lugas and Crashaw confer together, she sees Passauf make a stealthy movement toward the door behind her, by which she has just entered.

Instantly she springs back and standing in the door-way she puts up her hand and brings into view the tassel of an old-fashioned bell-cord.

"Stop where you are!" she cries, "or I will call the police!" Then as Crashaw utters a sharp exclamation and even Lugas starts, she adds: "Did you think I came here *alone?* There is some one down-stairs; I have only to ring to bring the police into the house. Rufus Crashaw, take these men away; promise me that Captain Makofski goes free and unharmed, and I swear that you shall find me with my father."

"Miss La Croix," says Lugas coming suddenly forward, "answer me one or two questions."

"Ask them."

"When you sent those letters of warning, did you sign your name?"

"No."

"Did you give the names of any one—any of the Council or Circle?"

"Do you think I wished to condemn my father? How could I denounce you, who have been his associates, without betraying him? Be at ease on that score. My sole wish was to save innocent lives, to prevent murder. The name of the Order is safe." She turns once more toward Rufus Crashaw. "I mean what I say Rufus Crashaw," she says firmly. "I know that I am at your mercy now because of my father. I have thwarted you thus far, but I did not know how nearly fatal to another my work would prove."

All this time Makofski has stood with his weapons still in his hand. Now he drops one of them into a side pocket and brings therefrom in it's stead a tiny whistle.

"Gentlemen," he says; "allow me to second Miss La Croix's request, that you leave the house at once, also let me inform you now that I was not quite unprepared for your attack." He lifts the whistle to his lips. "At another time I shall be quite ready to resume this interrupted conversation; now allow me to suggest, that this house is still my abiding place. Miss La Croix is still mistress here." He turns toward Moina who yet retains her hold upon the bell-cord. "Miss La Croix, is your maid within call?"

"Yes," in a low tone.

He glances at her face and then he moves so that his broad shoulders form a screen between her and the others.

Again it is Lugas who speaks. Signs and glances have been rapidly exchanged and the two burly strangers have already moved toward the door.

"Captain Fernand, you are a man of the world. I address you as such. Miss La Croix's confession has altogether exonerated you, and on our part all is as if the

events of the past hour had never occurred. It would not become me, as an agent of the council to say more. At another time, and as an individual, I shall hope to express myself more fully and in a better manner." He pauses, and Makofski bows silently. "As for Miss La Croix," he goes on, "we are willing to accept her parole, upon condition that she goes directly from this place to her own home, under such escort as we shall appoint. That she shall not mention this night's events to her father, and that she sees no one, and that she communicates with no one, until we shall have conferred with her again, which we will do to-morrow. We will then tell her our decision, as regards herself and her father."

Moina answers without leaving her place in the shadow of the doorway. "I shall remain here to night. To-morrow morning I will come. I agree to all the rest."

"And I," says Makofski, "with Miss La Croix's consent, will be the one to see her safely from this place to her own home and to her father's protection." He looks intently at Lugas, and the latter rightly interpreting the glance, thinks it best to agree, in spite of Crashaw's frown

There is little more to be said. The burly strangers are the first to go out and down the stairs, the others following, and Captain Makofski brings up in the rear.

At the foot of the stairs stands Minna, a look of anxiety upon her face. The street door is ajar.

"Go up to your mistress," says Makofski as he passes.

When Minna enters Miles La Croix's dark chamber, she finds Moina lying across the threshold between the two rooms, in a dead faint.

"How is she? Has she recovered?" It is half an hour since Minna lifted her new mistress in her strong young

arms and laid her tenderly upon her father's bed. It is Captain Fernand pacing up and down in the next room who asks the question of Minna entering through the connecting door-way.

"Better sir; but—"

"Then tell her that I must speak with her. It is necessary."

Ten minutes later they are face to face in Miles La Croix' studio, where the discreet Minna has turned on the lights and drawn down the curtains.

Moina is very pale still, and a strange tremulousness has overtaken her physical self. Her hand trembles and her voice is unsteady, but she betrays no other sign of emotion, as he enters and stands before her, begging her not to rise, and asking in the same breath, if she feels strong enough to tell him, how she happened to be there in that house, at such a time.

What she tells him may not be quite coherent, and is certainly a little deficient as to motive, but it seems to satisfy him, and his eye kindles from time to time as if he heard a something between the words.

"I had my own latch-key," she said. "We entered with that expecting to find Margot; but she was gone, and my own rooms and the drawing-room were locked; through some oversight papa's room had been left open, and while we stood in the door-way debating what we should do, we heard the street door open, and Rufus Crashaw's voice below. We heard a few words and then—"

She blushes rarely and her face droops as he leans toward her.

"You heard some words; tell me truly did you know the plot that was hatched against me?" He is standing close beside her now, and she finds herself saying brokenly:

"I—I feared, something, and when I heard those men below, I—I dared not go away or make myself known."

There is a low hassock close beside her, and quietly seating himself, he suddenly takes her hand.

"Say rather that you bravely dared to stay. Moina, do you know that you have saved me from death this night; yes from death. I had no suspicion of this plot, this attack. The two burly ruffians were the men who were to have made an end of me. But for you I should be at this moment lying dead up yonder, or fighting for my life against desperadoes."

She is weak and trembling still from the excitement of the past hour. She is a woman, and reaction must come.

"Oh!" she says wildly. "Have you escaped? Are you quite safe even yet?"

"I think so. I hope so for the present, certainly. But"—leaning closer and still holding her hand—"Moina, Moina in an hour like this be frank with me; tell me—for if it be true, this life which you have saved will be of far more value for the knowledge—did you come here to night and brave these would-be butchers for my sake? to save me?"

No answer. Her hands trembling in his, head drooped lower and yet lower, cheeks from pale to red again. He bends closer, bowing his head, and gently raising hers, their eyes meet for just a moment. Then her face is hidden upon his breast, his arms are clasping her close.

"Moina!" he whispers above her head, "Moina, beloved, mine!"

CHAPTER LX

THE LAST ASSAULT

Moina went to her new place of abode the next morning, and after an interview with M. Lugas (Crashaw she declined to confer with), assumed her place in the new house very much as before in the old. Lugas had exacted her promise not to go away from the new house except it be with her father, himself, Crashaw or Rene Savareis in attendance; not to write to or in any way hold comunication with any one outside of this circle; not to touch the books in her father's possession, or in any manner attempt to inform herself further concerning the doings of the 'group.'

And having received such promise, M. Lugas was satisfied. He knew Moina La Croix well enough to believe that, having given a promise no matter how reluctantly she would keep it in the letter and the spirit.

In return for all this Lugas engaged that her father should remain in ignorance of all that passed, and that Captain Fernand should be exonerated and reinstated, held innocent and so declared.

During the week that followed, Rene Savareis was often with the La Croix' and Captain Fernand sometimes. On one or two occasions there came a few rare moments when Captain Fernand and Moina found themselves alone together.

"Tell me," he said at one of these times, "if I should choose to go away for a little while, could I trust Savareis to bring a message to you? Would you wish it?"

"Yes, oh, yes," she said quickly. "You may trust him. He admires and likes you, and—I am a little in his confidence."

And so it came about that one day when Rene was with him in the old house on B— street, he approached the subject in a manly and straight forward way, and told him of his regard for Moina La Croix, admitted that there were reasons why he could not claim her openly at present, and begged that Rene, in case of need, and in his absence, would stand her friend.

"Of course," said Rene having given the required promise, "you know of Crashaw's pretensions?"

"Yes, and that is one reason why I speak thus to you. I may have to be absent from the city soon, and in the meantime if all were known she might be much annoyed; you understand?"

Savareis nodded, and closed the lips half open to tell him that he need have no fear since Rufus Crashaw was looking elsewhere for his rival.

"I will not speak of it," he said to himself. "He may not understand my motive." And so by this bit of delicacy, Captain Makofski was left in igorance of the fact that Rene Savareis was looked upon, by Rufus Crashaw, as his successful rival.

Ah, Rene Savareis that kindly meant reticence is yet to cost you dear; yes, dear indeed!

Margot returned to the house on B— street in the morning after the adventure therein, and Makofski continued to occupy his room there, Margot serving his meals, and performing the duties of the small menage with the help of a half-grown girl. The weather was still mild and every evening found him strolling and smoking, for an hour or more in the little oblong park near the house.

It was here that Lugas found him one evening several days after the investigation, that had been so nearly fatal

to Captain Fernand and his plans. The astute doctor had come in person to assure him that all has been "quietly explained and settled," without any dissatisfaction. To proffer the olive-branch and make one of the circle as of old. He had called first at the house he said and had been directed thither by Margot.

Makofski had received him affably, and the two, having disposed of the business which had brought them together, were pacing up and down under the trees, smoking in amiable concert.

"Do you often come here?" asked Lugas, "it seems a quiet place to smoke and think."

"Every night, now that I am alone. These open-air smokes used to be a part of my nightly routine for years," was Captain Fernand's reply.

"Is it not just a little bit lonely?"

"Well it's not much frequented, if you mean that. And it's not too well lighted. But it suits me."

And so the second week approached its end and Friday night comes.

There is a light wind abroad, and the air is moist even at sunset, and at dusk there is a soft haze enveloping everything.

"It is going to rain," said Margot to herself standing at the street door and looking up and down through the haze, and then as she hears a noise above stairs, "My word, the captain has not gone out yet, and its half an hour later than usual." But even as she says the words he comes down-stairs, a large traveling bag in his hand.

"Ah!" she cries seeing this, "Ah! captain, what is that?"

"It's for the laundryman's boy. He will come for it soon, I think."

He steps outside and looks up and down in his turn,

whistling a few bars of a light Russian air, and Margot draws back.

"Here you are," he says in a moment, breaking off in the middle of a long note as a boy appeared at the foot of the stairs, "and here is the bag." He hands it down to the boy and turns again to Margot, and says, "I may be out late to night; you need not wait for me. I shall want nothing." He goes down the steps, the boy with the valise moving on a few paces ahead of him, and Margot closes and locks the door.

At half past eight the little oblong park is very quiet. Its walks are solitary, when Captain Fernand enters. He glances carelessly about him. Two men just outside, and seemingly half inclined to enter, draw back and make a feint of passing on, and down the street. Evidently their promenade is an aimless one, for they turn at the nearest corner and stroll back, halting at the gate again. Many moments go by while they stand thus. A policeman glances at them carelessly and when he is a few paces beyond turns and looks back. Then he crosses the street, and out of sight of the two at the gate confers a moment with a brother officer.

"They're on hand," he says, "ready to be nabbed."

"Well," declares No. Two, "we're ready to nab them, only it's too soon. Let's get through;" and they cross the street feigning great interest in each other.

And now, walking slowly, and not too close together, two others approach the little park. The two officers have become more in earnest. They do not seem so much as to see the large man with shabby clothing, nervous gait, and half-averted face, nor his companion who is like him in dress, but smaller, and who swaggers as he passes them with a bold stare.

As these two latest comers approach the gate, they slacken their pace, draw nearer each other and cease

their conversation. They seem quite oblivious to the two men standing in the shadow of the trees, but quite near.

Standing thus, they can hardly help hear one of the two men just beyond them say in a voice slightly elevated, "All right Charlie, I'll be there." The next moment they have passed through the gate and are quickly lost to sight among the shadows.

As they go, one of the officers says to the other, "Hear that? That's the signal. Come; let's make our round up."

Five minutes pass, and then ten. All is still in and about the little park. Within, a spark of light seems to be advancing toward the entrance. The two men still conversing without, draw closer to the low paling. The fiery spark comes nearer, quite to the entrance, and then it stops and the smoker stands pulling hard at his cigar and making it glow still brighter through the gloom. Is he going to leave now? The men without almost hold their breath. But no. He turns, he is going back again.

"Come," whispers one of the watchers; "now is our time." They move out from the shadow now, and stand waiting for the smoker to put a few more paces between them.

"Come," whispers the leader, but even as he speaks he has the sensation of something springing upon him from the rear and feels a strong grasp upon his shoulder. Something cold touches the back of his neck, something that makes him shudder.

"Not a word," says a low voice. "Not a sound. Move on and be quick about it."

They are in the grasp of the policemen and two others are hurrying across the way. It is too late to run. Remonstrances are of no avail. Fernand Makofski still keeping his cigar fiercely alight, passes alone under the

trees and through the shrubbery which grows dense in places. Suddenly he stops short, stretches out his arms, yawns audibly, and then deliberately seats himself on the rustic bench with one arm thrown across the back and his cigar in his fingers. It grows dim and dimmer while he seems lost in meditation. "Pshaw!" he mutters quite audibly, and then one might fancy, if one were listening, that he was trying to light a fresh cigar. Ah! and there are listeners, for as if the sound were a signal, something springs upon him from the bushes in front, something grasps at him from the rear.

Is he taken by surprise? It would seem so, for he makes no outcry, almost no resistance. He utters a sound barely loud enough to be heard ten paces away, something between a gasp and a hiss and he wrenches himself free from the detaining hands behind him and throws himself forward, downward on one knee. Then half a dozen forms seem to have sprung out of the darkness, and there is a struggle going on, fierce but short, and amazingly silent.

When it is over there are no dark forms lying prone upon the pathway to be found at dawn by the park policeman.

Instead two figures handcuffed and drooping are led from the scene by a double brace of policemen and Captain Makofski is marching at their head.

Early in the morning a bit of comedy is enacted at the station where the two loiterers at the little park gate have reluctantly passed the night.

Rudely aroused and only half awake, they are hurried into the captain's office, and there confronted by a little man who eyes them from head to foot and turns to the officer in charge:

"This is a fine brace of birds to bring before me!' he says loftily. "Who are they anyhow? They're not the men I'm after. Turn 'em loose."

"Case of mistaken identity," says their captor indifferently. And soon, in the gray of the morning, cold, hungry and enraged, they find themselves free men once more.

CHAPTER LXI

THE SURRENDER

Captain Makofski led the way toward the park entrance followed by a silent party, captors and captured.

Here two carriages were drawn up close to the curb, and well in the shadow. Before these the party halted, and the leader addressed the Makofski in a half whisper.

"How shall we go?"

"Take your man, three of you, and follow my carriage; you know where to go." In another moment the prisoners were separated and the two carriages were driving rapidly up town.

When the last carriage came to a halt, and the three officers alighted with their prisoner, he lifted his eyes to where a light streamed out across the pavement, and saw not the police station but the stately door of a mansion. He recoiled with a wild, hoarse cry, and made a frantic effort to throw off his guards.

But they were too strong for him, and he found himself being forced up the marble steps over the threshold and into the wide hall. Then as the door closed behind them, he cast a wild glance about; Captain Fernand and his fellow-prisoner and the two officers all had disappeared.

The man began to tremble violently, and the leader of the three officers pushed him toward a high-backed, antique chair.

"Sit down," he said, not unkindly, "you're nervous, man."

The prisoner dropped into the chair. "In God's name," he cried, "why have you brought me to this place?"

"Don't be impatient," said the other, "you'll soon know."

Meanwhile in a room above, two men were talking earnestly, one of them making certain strange changes in his general appearance, by removing false beard and wig, and working off some disfiguring stains and pigments, as he conversed.

"I don't think it would do at all, Ken," he was saying. "If I know anything about human nature, it will only add to his obstinacy if you undeceive him now. For the present let him think of you as a prisoner like himself, or as having deserted him at the last moment. You can help me but in that way and the crisis has come, Ken. I am playing my last cards."

A few minutes later, Kenneth having gone and Drexel appearing himself again, he called to the officer below to bring up his prisoner. Again as they led him forward, the prisoner halting at the foot of the stairs, drew back and made a futile effort to free himself from his captors.

"Fer God's sake, don't take me up there!" he cried. "I won't go!"

"Yes you will! Come man, don't give yourself worry. You're not going to be hung—yet."

And seeing his helplessness, he again submitted and was led reluctantly upstairs. But at the sight of an open door toward which they were about to lead him, he recoiled again.

This time no words were wasted in urging, and the helpless and now trembling man was borne bodily through the open door, and left standing alone in the very center of the room, with his guards arranged in a line between the door and himself, and with two men,

the one standing and the other seated, just opposite him.

The room was a bed-chamber—a gentleman's room, evidently.

"Turn up the lights, Bates," said Roger Drexel; and as Bates obeyed he approached the prisoner and touched him on the arm.

"Look up, Joseph Parker," he said. "Mr. Lord, will you take a look at this man?"

Elias Lord, paler and thinner than of old, and with more gray in his thick hair, came slowly toward the agitated prisoner and looked long and earnestly into his face.

"Yes," he said, "that is the man who entered my room nearly eight months ago, and pinned a letter of denunciation over my sleeping head with a keen pointed dagger."

He turned abruptly to Bates. "Give the man a seat," he said.

"Well," he said to him, after a moment's hesitation, "what are you going to do with me?"

Something like a gleam of amusement flashed across the face of the old banker.

"I'm afraid I can't give you parole when the clock strikes two," he said, "but on the other hand, I won't constrain you to stay with a revolver at your head. Your friends might not know just where to look for you!"

The prisoner winced.

"However," went on Mr. Lord, "I am glad to find that you're a man of your word. You recollect you said possibly you would come again!" A pause; the prisoner writhed in his chair. "And you know I said I would be ready for you. As to when you go, this time, I shall leave it to this gentleman to decide—when you go and how."

"Bates," said Drexel, "you and your men may wait outside and come when you are called. Mr. Lord's servants will look to your comfort. You understand?"

CAPTORS AND CAPTURED.—Moina, p. 394.

"Quite, sir." Bates opened the door, and when his men had passed out, followed.

When they were alone, Drexel, Lord, and the prisoner, the former drew up a chair and seating himself directly in front of Parker, addressed him.

"Joseph Parker, less than three years ago you were an honest man, with a good trade, a home, a wife, and little children. You were respected and your conscience was clear. Why have you thrown yourself away like this? What has dragged you down?"

Suddenly the prisoner's head went up. He answered with a sort of dogged defiance.

"If I was to tell you, you wouldn't believe me," he cried. "Want and hunger, no work and starving children drives many a man to crime; better men than me, or you, maybe. Ask that old man there, what he knows about want and temptation. It's wrong for such men as you to judge such men as me. Drop this now. You've got me; make an example of me."

His face had turned an angry red.

"And when we have made an example of you, what will become of your wife and your little ones?"

The man writhed in his chair, and again great beads of sweat stood out on his temples. "God!' he cried, "this is hell itself! Curse you! why do you say these things?"

"Because—look at me well, Joseph Parker—I am the man whom you tried to murder to-night. And if I brought you here, instead of sending you to prison, it is because I believe you have still some manhood left, and if you do not disappoint me, it is in my power to save you, to make you a free man once more, and send you, with your wife and children, away from this city, with the means to begin life elsewhere—a new life."

Throughout this speech the man has gazed at him with incredulous eyes.

"What—what does it mean?" he gasps out; "what do you want me to do?"

Drexel takes from his pocket a slip of paper, evidently placed there in readiness. It is small, soiled and crumpled. He holds it before the prisoner's eyes.

Parker looks, looks again and closer; turns pale, clutches at the paper and cries loudly: "You have robbed me! I—I—where did you get that? Give it to me."

"Not so fast, and sit down again, Parker. No matter where I got this now, I have it as you see, and this is what I want in exchange for your liberty; first, I want to know the full meaning of this slip of paper, where you got it, and from whom. What use did you make of this post-office address, and of the address of Lawyer Fallingsbee. Mind, I have a clue to this matter."

"I can't," breaks in Parker, "there is nothing to tell."

"Next," goes on Drexel, "I want to know who set you to enter this house, with the help of the Spider, and little Hans? Ah, that surprises you. You see I know something about these matters. Also, did you have lot or part in the murder of poor Harvey, on that very bed, in this very room."

"No, no!" he cried," I swear it! I did not! I did not!"

"Next and last, I want to know the names of the men who set you on to murder me to-night. Come, you were caught in the act; you can't deny that."

Suddenly Parker turned and looked toward the door as if searching for some one.

"Where is my—the man that was with me?" he asked quickly.

"Never mind him. You can't have the benefit of his advice. If he gets off easy it will be because we came to an understanding with you. If we spare you we shall have to let your friend go, of course."

"Who are you that you know, or think you know, so much? Tell me that?"

Drexel leaned toward him, and whispered a few words in his ear. The effect was magical.

From pale to red, and back to pale; fear, anger, resentment, all speak in his face—he is upon his feet once more.

"So!" he cries, "this is the trap you have set for me. All the rest was not enough, and you must add this. If you fear me, if you want to kill me, do it! I hate you. Yes I hate it all. I'll curse you, all your guilds and circles and groups with my last breath. Bloodsuckers that prey on the workingman—that's what you are. But I've betrayed no one nor nothing! I'm not food for your butchers yet!" He stops, overcome by his own vehemence, and Roger Drexel realizing that his moment has come, and fixing his eye with his own clear magnetic gaze speaks:

"Joseph Parker, ever since I chanced to hear you express yourself as being no longer a dupe of the order you have just denounced, my eye has been upon you. I, like yourself, have lived to repent my alliance with the brotherhood. It is because I am fighting it to the death that I am here, and you are here—you see I am not afraid to speak. Now, either you give me the truth and to help me to crush the men who are making the order a curse to the earth; or you are going to prison. I will not be thwarted in my purpose. If you help me, you and I will, in a month's time, be rid of our enemies. What do you know of the old man they call the Spider? What do you know of Rufus Crashaw? of M. Lugas? of Jules Passauf? Tell me the truth."

The man cowered away from him and dropped back in his chair.

"Oh, heaven help me!" he cried; "my wife and chil-

dren! If I am not back, if I cannot give a good account of myself this time, my wife and babies will be made to suffer, if it were not for them—"

"I can't stand this," bursts from the lips of Elias Lord. "Let's give him a proof of our good faith," he says, meeting Drexel's eye. The latter nods and for a few moments all sit silently waiting. And then the door opens and Joseph Parker sees with startled eyes, his wife and his little ones—all there before him clean, smiling, freshly clad.

"Oh, Joe!" cries the wife, "thank these kind gentlemen, both of them; they have given us a home, and they say your troubles about the work and all, are at an end."

Dazedly he gazes from wife to children, and then back to the two men beside him.

"What does it mean?" he gasps weakly.

"It means this, Joe," Drexel replies, "you can stay here, in this house, where no one will ever dream of looking for you, safe and protected, with wife and little ones, until these rascals are caged or driven out of the country."

Still the tortured, bewildered man looks from one to the other. Then suddenly he turns upon Elias Lord.

"Do you promise this?" he cries; "promise upon your honor? You."

"Upon my honor, upon my soul. As I am a gentleman and a Christian, I promise."

A moment he bows his head upon his hands, then lifting it:

"Come what will," he cries, "I'll be a free man again, or die!"

CHAPTER LXII

THE PRINCESS IN REVOLT

It is morning, the morning following the eve of the attack upon Captain Fernand, and, although it is very early, the Princess Sacha Orloff has breakfasted and is waiting a visitor in her charming little drawing room in the Occidental.

An hour has passed since she was aroused by her maid, who standing at her bedside held a letter before her sleep-laden eyes.

And this is what the lady read, sitting erect amidst her linen and lace.

"*Madam*:—The time has come. Expect me in an hour. And pardon the unusual time. Moments now are as valuable as human lives. HURST."

Just as the last of the sixty seconds is ticked off by the French clock on the mantel, the curtain is drawn aside, and "Hurst the detective"—Roger Drexel—stands before her.

He is as calm as ever, but her quick eye notes the unusual pallor of his face, and the lines of weariness about the dark eyes, none the less keen for that, and the unusual sternness of the firm set lips.

There are no formalities between them at this moment. Not an instant is wasted in feeble conventional greetings. "Madam, I must beg you to command yourself," he began. "I have much to say and little time in which to say it. I have fulfilled my promise, and the time has come when I must claim yours. When we parted

in this room, not so long ago, you uttered these words: Bring me Basil Petralowski, if he is alive, or the truth concerning him, if he is dead, and I swear to render you any service within my power, anything.' Madam, have you forgotten?"

"No," she articulated. "Tell me—have you found him?"

"I have found Basil Petralowski."

"Alive?" The word comes from between pallid lips.

"Dead."

"Wait," she murmurs, and sits motionless as before. Presently she speaks in low, measured unnatural tones. "Do you know how he died?"

"It was murder—at least I believe it was treachery."

"Tell me everything," she said, and there is a new look in her face—a look that bodes ill for someone.

"It is a long story," he begins; "in fact, to make you understand all as I wish, you must listen to two or three stories interwoven, all with the same beginning and the same end, all involving those of whom you now most wish to hear."

"Whom do you mean?" she broke in, "of whom do I most wish to hear?"

"Unless I mistake you altogether, you wish to hear, above all else, of the men who brought Basil Petralowski to his death."

"You are right!" she said, quickly. "And now we understand each other."

From that moment there was, on her part, no more mystery, no denials; the secret of her interest in Basil Petralowski's fate was a secret no longer.

"When you put your case before," he began, "giving me, however, only half confidences, I had two other matters of interest and importance in hand, in my capacity of detective. I believe I signified as much to you."

"Yes."

"One, the first to occupy my attention, because most attractive to me, through my being strangely drawn to the chief actor in it. From first to last, if indeed it is yet ended, it was a sad tragedy. Briefly this is the story: One night, a Sunday night, while the worshipers were pouring out from a certain popular up-town church, a gentle, innocent, harmless old man was shot down in the street. It chanced that two of my acquaintances were so near at hand that they were able to reach the spot before the assassin had left his victim's side. Indeed he had not made the slightest attempt to escape. He gave himself up willingly, and neither then nor afterward, would he open his lips as to the murder. He would not give his name, nor his motive for the deed. When his trial came on he refused to accept counsel and he pleaded guilty without attempting to establish an extenuating circumstance."

"Gracious heavens!" in spite of herself she had grown interested in the weird story; "and was that allowed, here, in this land of justice?"

"It would not have been. The court was on the point of naming a lawyer for his defense when the head of one of the first law firms in the city came forward, and announced himself as counsel for the prisoner. But all was in vain. The strange man would not talk with him, would admit nothing, deny nothing. In such a case, and with the prisoner pleading guilty, what could a lawyer do? The man was condemned, and he died upon the scaffold mutely, a mystery still."

"But the lawyer? I can't comprehend. You say he retained him?"

"Ah, no, not the prisoner. There was another mystery: the lawyer, a Mr. Fallingsbee was retained by an anony-

mous correspondent, who paid a large fee but did not make him or herself known."

"Not to the prisoner?"

"Not to the prisoner. But, let me finish the story. I had grown interested in this strange case and the strange mute prisoner. I obtained admission to his cell. I tried to gain his confidence. I had not known the man whom he killed but as the trial progressed I chanced to see his picture, and I was struck with its resemblance to a man I knew well. And suddenly upon that, together with such knowledge as I had of this man and his victim, for I was with the condemned man at the end, I put my new belief to the test and learned two things."

"And they?" eagerly.

"First: This man who was about to die had belonged to a powerful secret society."

"Ah. That explained the lawyer and his fee."

"That is how I reasoned. And next—the man was expiating a worse than useless crime. He had killed the wrong man."

"Ah, heavens!"

"This much the unhappy man did not deny. But his admissions ended there."

"And you never learned his name?"

"Not from him. I have learned it since, as well as much of his melancholy history. Having discovered that Jacob Traill had died because of his fatal resemblance to another, I next turned my attention to that other. I readily settled upon Elias Lord as the right one."

He has spoken the last words scanning her face, and he sees her start as he spoke the name.

"Elias Lord!" she ejaculated.

"That is the name. You have heard it before perhaps?"

"Never mind that now." She has controlled herself again. "Go on."

"Elias Lord was an active worker against a powerful secret society that was seeking to overthrow the present order of things. Elias Lord was an open enemy, I say, and had been marked by his foes. I know this much, and I also know that this great society had recently become doubly dangerous, doubly formidable because of a new element with power in its hands, which had lately come into it at the fountain head, from over the waters. I had already determined to devote myself to the task of unearthing these new leaders, and of driving them out of the country, when I was summoned into your presence, and heard as much as you then choose to tell me about Basil Petralowski and his disappearance. Shortly after the death of the mysterious, nameless prisoner, I was at the house of Elias Lord, and there I was made acquainted with a young girl, a Miss Moina La Croix; my hostess had crossed the water, quite recently in Miss La Croix' company. On board was also the father of Miss La Croix. There were two other passengers who were presented, my hostess told me, to herself, and, mark this, to Miss La Croix and her father."

"Yes."

"I left the house a little in advance of the lady, and, upon coming out—my detective training made me at once aware of a man, a spy, in fact, who was watching the house. Naturally, I in turn watched the spy and I soon found that he was shadowing Miss La Croix. I followed her home, and I followed him; by so doing I was so fortunate as to see the two other passengers, who had been presented as strangers to the young lady and her father, enter the La Croix' residence quite like familiars. The names of these two men were Rufus Crashaw and Rene Savareis."

"I see," murmured the princess.

"Shortly after my meeting with you, a horrible thing happened. There was a dinner party at Elias Lord's. Miss La Croix was one of the guests. She came and went early, and just upon the heels of her going, an infernal machine, introduced into the house, no one knew how, exploded in the hands of the host, injuring him seriously."

"What?" cried the princess.

"Does that surprise you? Well, upon questioning the servants it was made to appear that Miss La Croix stood for a moment by the table from which Lord took the fatal box, and it was thought that she had something in her hand."

The princess made an impatient movement.

"It did seem indefinite; of course an investigation was begun at once and I then learned from one of the ladies of the family, that Mr. Lord had been the recipient of at least two warning letters. I obtained possession of these two letters, and, while searching in other directions, as I was bound to do, I put the La Croix, Savareis and Crashaw all under close surveillance. Before that time, and for the sole reason that you had roused vague suspicions in me, by not being more frank in telling me your story, I had also put a watch upon you."

"Ah—indeed!"

"And you may fancy my surprise when, after some days, one of my men reported to me that you had received two visitors, one of them being Rene Savareis, and the other—my spy, whom I had seen following Moina La Croix."

Madam the princess draws a sudden sharp breath.

"M. Hurst," she exclaims, "you are a clever man."

"Thank you. Do you begin to see the denouement?"

"No—not altogether. Pray, continue."

"Having learned this, I determined to know more. In following up Crashaw, I have found a certain M. Lugas often with him at the La Croix'; I include M. Lugas among my subjects for inquiry. I also include the names of the Prince Viadimei Orloff and Basil Petralowski."

"Ah!" The eyes of the princess flashed angrily now. But she curbs her speech, and he goes on unmoved.

"In due time my reports from Europe begin to flow in. You may have heard the name Bolossy?"

She starts and nods assent.

"There are three of them, all detectives, one at Paris, two in Russia—much that is most valuable comes from them. I know the source, and so have no need to question the reports."

He takes a folded memorandum from his pocket. "Permit me to read a few paragraphs taken from M. Bolossy's documents. It will help you to follow me the more readily."

"Read them."

"It is but a paragraph out of pages, please recollect." He begins to read. "Madam La Princess Orloff. This lady is thought by many, to be secretly interested in matters political, the late Prince Orloff having been one of the bitterest of the enemies of the revolutionary party, and her father also. It is thought that the princess is perpetuating their work. Certainly she stands high in diplomatic and official circles.

"There is another rumor, that the princess, while assuming to be devoted to the party of the palace, is in reality in sympathy with the nihilists, and that a certain active revolutionist, who disappeared from Odessa more than a year ago, under circumstances the strangest, was in reality her devoted friend. Rumor is divided as to the cause of her leaving Russia. By some this

young man is thought to be the magnet. But generally it is supposed that the mission of the princess abroad is strictly political in the Russian sense of the word."

"That is," comments she, "a spy."

Drexel lays the memorandum down upon his knee. "You will see," he goes on, "by this, how, after hearing of M. Savareis and the man known to me as the Spider, in connection with yourself, and after reading this," tapping the paper, "I was ready to connect you with the superior councils. But now I will hasten on. I had arrived at the point when I thought it best to keep a redoubled watch upon all. I also wished to find the old man known as the Spider, for I had traced the dynamite box to him. He will soon be arrested. Do you not see the end?"

"Not quite. Having learned so much, why was it necessary for you to carry on that monstrous masquerade? Why did you drag Fernand Makofski from his grave, assume his character, and in that character seek shelter under Miles La Croix' roof?"

"Need you ask that? Because, then, my information was too general. Because I needed to know the role each man was playing in this desperate game. Because it was the quickest and surest way of learning their innermost secrets, and in order to get these men into my power, I must know them. It was the surest way."

"And the most deadly dangerous."

"I assumed the name of Makofski because I chanced to know enough of the man's history, and of Russian affairs to enable me to enact the role. Because, too, I knew it was the role most likely to open all their doors to me."

Madam the princess rises and paces the length of the room—something is rousing her, stirring her strangely.

"Man," she says, at last coming back to her place,

"you have no doubt been in many perilous situations, braved many dangers. I believe you are a fearless man, but I shudder when I think of the risk you have run and are still running. I will not ask you why you have done all this. We are past motives. But tell me—in mercy's name, why have you told me—me of all women—this story of your daring? Do you know what you have done?"

He pushes back his chair and rises and faces her.

"Because," he says sharply, "I have reached a point where I can no longer act alone. I must have help, and you, of all human beings, are the one who can and must help me."

They are face to face now, and she draws herself to her fullest height and looks in his face.

"When I pledged myself to do anything that was in my power, in return for knowledge that would have been priceless to me, I was sincere in that promise. I am ready to fulfill it now—money, any sum is yours, when I have heard all. Any other thing that is mine to give, but—if you mean to ask me to help you in hunting down these men, you are asking what is not in my power."

She comes still closer, there is a ring of triumph in her voice. "And this is why. Of Rufus Crashaw, M. Lugas, Miles La Croix, as men, as personalities, I have nothing to say. I care nothing. As members, officers if you will, of a great organization, I must say this: You have made a mistake, sir detective, in being thus frank with me. You have shown your hand. I now will let you see mine. I shall warn these men at once. I cannot permit harm to come to them, for they are the members in a society in which I hold a place; the place of their superior, their dictator, if I chose to use my authority. Those men, whatever their misdeeds, are useful to our order, M. Hurst. You cannot harm them through me."

CHAPTER LXIII

LIFTING THE VEIL

Again, as on another night, when Fernand Makofski was arraigned before the dainty tigress, she throws back her head and awaits his answer in triumph. This time she is sure of her victory; her position is unassailable now.

But again, as on that other night, his face is inscrutable.

"Madam," he asks as if arguing his case, "do you then act as their executive? Am I to understand that you have sanctioned the deed by which Mr. Lord's servant lost his life?"

"I have said I know nothing of that deed."

"Nor of the dynamite box?"

"Nothing."

"Were you, perchance, aware that three separate attempts to assassinate 'Fernand Makofski' have failed?"

"No! Is that true?"

"Quite true. But there is still another question. Knowing the truth why did you allow me to continue the masquerade in the character of Captain Makofski?"

"I will be frank. First, I was not given the authority I now hold, until quite recently, and I have not yet made that authority known to the council."

"Ah, I see."

"Next, I let you go on because I was over-anxious about my own interests. I even fancied that your presence in the house of La Croix might be needful in my interest, in some manner."

"And you were right. Madam, you have been too hasty. If you will now resume your seat I will finish that which I wish to say. And as you have declared yourself against me, let me tell you what the service is which I expect and ask at your hands."

"Go on."

"First, in the general reckoning, Miles La Croix, his daughter, M. Rene Savareis and one other must go unscathed. No harm must reach them. Perhaps you can see now why I do not wish to turn all this over to the police?"

"I see. Go on," she says.

"Second, the man called the Spider and some others of lesser importance will be left to the private police, or detectives. Third, I look to you to rid us, this city, your order, the world if need be, of three men."

"Their names?"

"Crashaw, Lugas and Passauf."

"You are mad!"

"We will see. Let us now go back to your friend Basil Petralowski."

"To Basil—ah!" She is in her place again, and he sits down opposite her. And now he hurries on, paying little heed to her interruptions.

"Among the other questions sent to Bolossy, in Russia was this:

"What can you learn of the last six months of B. P. spent in Russia?

"Here is his reply, in brief words:

"He was connected with the revolutionists and devoted to their cause. He was denounced, and a certain man, high in favor, asked for authority to deal with the culprit. This man, said Bolossy, had a private grudge, some say an injury to avenge. He had a fair wife and it is just whispered that there was jealousy at the bottom

of the feud. This man, he would not give his name but stated that he, soon after the disappearance of Petralowski, contrived to get his way. First Petralowski was sent to Paris on a trumped up secret mission.

"Arriving in Paris he found himself among strangers and denounced as an emissary of the Russian Police. A mock trial resulted in a, what they called, test of loyalty. He was to prove himself by going to America with sealed orders, that is to say, to execute some plan which would only be revealed to him when in New York. There was no alternative. He knew he could never return to Russia until he stood acquitted of the charge of disloyalty to the circle. He consented to sail for New York. And now, just as he is about to sail, he encounters a familiar face—the face of a man calling himself Craizon. Craizon was once a traveler in Russia visiting parts of Siberia, some of the penal settlements and mines, and many of the Russian cities, sight seeing under the protection of the czar "

"Ah," she cries. "Vilest of all. An alien spy. A spy for hire alone."

"That is it. Well this spy for hire, this man with no wrongs to right, had met Petralowski in Odessa, and he renewed the acquaintance, for he chanced to come to New York on the same steamer."

"Chanced? Ah, I see."

"Once in New York, however, the two men separated, meeting seldom and only by accident. And now I will read to you a portion, at least, of a confession, made and taken down last night. It is the confession of an unfortunate man who had been made the tool of others, and it contains the sequel to what we know of Basil Petralowski."

He has taken a second paper from his pocket, and opening it he at once begins to read.

The document is formally begun, giving date of writing, and full name of the "deponent," but Drexel hurries over this, and omitting the name of Joseph Parker wherever it occurs, reads on, composedly, while she listens with growing emotion as the narrative progresses.

Much that he read in detail, that his story might be complete in every point, need not be repeated here. We will take up the record at a point touching upon the fateful tragedy of Basil Petralowski.

"'It was at the time when so many men lay out of work for so many months, and so I did not wonder much that no work was found for me. The council paid me my weekly allowance, or rather Craizon did. He was disburser for my district, he said, and so time passed on until one day, I was sent for to attend the meeting of the special committee. It was Craizon again who notified me.'"

"Craizon?" broke out the princess. "Do I know that man, M. Hurst?"

"Patience; you shall see."

"Do I know the writer of this confession?"

"I think not. Permit me to go on."

"Go on then."

"'I was present at this meeting, part of the time waiting in an ante-room, and of course not hearing all that was said. It seemed that a man was wanted who could be trusted to do a bit of business for the order of which I had been made a member. I was first sworn to secrecy and then told what I had to do. It seemed simple enough. I was to answer an advertisement.'"

"Ah!" ejaculated the princess, then, as if vexed with herself, "Go on pray."

"'I was shown the advertisement; it was simple enough. It was like this: "To S. C. and J. C. From Paris to New York. Yesterday. Await your commands. Medium."

And the number to which a reply was to be sent followed like a postscript.'

"'They told me to take a pen and write like this:'

"'Medium. Appoint a place of meeting, and give me a sign for to-morrow A. M., as soon as I accost you put this note into my hand, and receive your instructions.

"'S. C. and J. C.'

"'I wrote this down and then it was posted. The next day I was at hand at the hour appointed and was sent to receive the reply from 'Medium." It was there and said, as nearly as I can remember:'

"'Central Park, at Eighth and Seventy-ninth streets. Young man, tall, brown eyes and hair. Will carry underneath arm a lacquered cane with carved onyx head.'"

"Ah, heavens!" almost shrieks the princess, but he reads rapidly on.

"'That was the answer and they gave me my instructions. I expected to carry a letter, but they schooled me to say certain words which were almost meaningless to me. I remember all of that message; how could I help it?'

"'Well, I went to Hunter's gate, and there was the young man with the onyx-headed cane. He was very handsome but pale and with a troubled look in his eyes. Something about his look and his voice when he spoke made me think that he was not an American. I set him down as being a Frenchman. I went up to him and said, "Good morning, Mr. Medium," as if that were his name. He looked me over a moment and then said, "what can I do for you, sir?" "Give me my note," said I. This satisfied him and he gave me back my note.'

"'Then standing close beside him I repeated to him these words:'

"'This is the decision of the council. They will not receive you. It is best for those who are to remain and

work here, that you do not meet. As for you, as soon as your mission is accomplished, you will return to Paris and from thence to Russia, as the bearer of papers which we shall send, for reasons which you shall comprehend from this port to Paris via post.'

"'When I had said these words I saw his face light up and I heard him whisper "Back to Russia," as if he were glad to go. Then I went on:'

"'These are the commands of the council. A certain man is to be transferred. If he remains here he will do harm to the cause. This is your work. He must be gone before you can leave. All is left to you as to method. It will not be difficult.'

"'When I had said this, I paused and waited for a reply. I never saw a more ghastly face. He seemed turned into stone. He did not look at me, nor speak, and so I went on and uttered the closing words of my verbal message. 'Remember your oath.' I said. 'Do this and you go back to Russia free and vindicated. This is final.'

"'Then the man groaned so loud I feared he would be heard.

"'My oath,' he said, not to me but to himself. 'God forgive me!' And then I suppose my stare brought him to his senses, for he looked at me fiercely for a moment and then asked.

"'Is there anything more?'

"'I told him nothing, except a card, and this I gave to him. It contained the name and address of the man who was to be "transferred" and some notes of instruction how to find him; I knew that much, but the name and all the rest were written in French. As God is my judge, I did not know the meaning of any part of that message. If I had—but it's no use saying that. I did

not know nor guess, not until after, and I never saw the young man again after that, but once.'

"'They paid me so well for this hour's service that for a month or more we got on very well; but still there was no work for me, though I kept trying. Then, in about five weeks, they sent for me again, this same "executive." This time I was to secure a postoffice box at one of the suburban offices. It must be a lock-box, and after getting it I was to contrive to get a letter into the hands of a certain lawyer, a Mr. Fallingsbee. I got the postoffice box and the next morning got the letter into the lawyer's hands. The next morning there was a letter in the box. I took it to the "executive" and for two or three weeks thought little of the matter. Craizon had found me a place to work.'

"'But one day I dropped in at Ohm's, that is the saloon where I first met Craizon; there I picked up one of the illustrated police papers and saw there the picture of a murder. It was the murder of an old man who was killed as he was going home from church. As I read it I came across the name of Lawyer Fallinsgbee. Something came over me then, and I could not rest until I had seen the man who had done the killing. I don't know now what I expected, but I was uneasy until the trial opened and when it did I left my work and hung about the court. It was two or three days before I caught sight of the prisoner, not until all was over and he had been condemned, in fact, and then—ah, can I ever forget it?—It was the young man I had met in the park! Then I was half a madman. I went in search of Craizon and when I found him I almost assaulted him.'"

"Tell me—tell me now who was the young man with the brown hair and eyes; the young man who died—on—the—scaffold?" Her voice is husky now. She is bend-

ing toward him clutching his arm in a vice-like grip, "Tell me. I can endure this no longer."

"Perhaps it is best. That young man, sacrificed as much as was ever his victim, was—Basil Petralowski."

"I knew it!" she whispers; "I feared it from the first." And then she tottered to her feet, her face full of an unutterable woe.

"Have mercy upon me!" she articulates. "Leave me—just for an hour."

What man could refuse? Not Roger Drexel, even though his moments now are so precious. He goes down to the office and there passes an uneasy hour.

When he returns to the boudoir he finds the princess awaiting him, and so haggard that he could easily have imagined her to have passed through, not an hour but a year of woe.

"I am waiting," she says. And then as he takes his former place, "I think before I fully understood, in speaking of this—this prisoner, you said you were with him at the last?"

"Yes."

"Tell me more. Was he calm? What did he say to you?"

"Very little, except to thank me for my interest. I besought him to trust me, to let me serve him, but he did not comply. There was no complaint, no repining; he was firm, manly to the last."

"Thank you."

For a moment she bows her head; then, "I can understand it," she says in a strangely hushed tone. "He could not tell you his story, could not leave any message for us, for his mother or for me, without revealing the whole truth. Don't you see? he must tell how basely he was entrapped and betrayed, or brand himself as a willful murderer. He would die in silence rather than

that—" And lifting her head suddenly, "he knew me, he knew that letting me know the truth through you, would be simply to leave me a legacy of vengeance. Ah! Basil, Basil, by dying in silence you hoped to spare me. But it is not to be. And you shall be avenged. Yes, and vindicated." Her voice is still calm, but it is a fearful calm. "Am I not right, you who knew him—say, was he not a martyr?"

"And a hero." Adds Drexel gravely.

"A martyr and a hero—yes. And was he not also—betrayed?"

"Without a doubt."

"Tell me, tell me without more words, who betrayed him?"

"Do you not guess?"

"I dare not guess! Tell me!"

"Madam La Princess, I will be more generous to you than you were to me an hour ago; and yet my enemies and yours are identical." Again he takes the roll of memoranda from his pocket, and casts his eye down the page. "Did you ever hear of this man Craizon before to-night?"

"I seem to have heard the name, but can recall nothing. You say he has been in Russia?"

"Yes. Permit me to read two more extracts from M. Bolossy. It concerns this Craizon," beginning to read. 'The man calling himself Craizon, is an Englishman who was once engaged in manufacturing pursuits with an elder brother, who bore with him until forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and then providing for him liberally, only stipulating that he never returned. We next hear of him in Russia; there is no evidence that he had an active hand in the disappearance of young Petralowski; but it is known that he made the young man's acquaintance at St. Petersburg, that he left for Paris just

one week before the disappearance of Petralowski—that the two met in Paris; and that they embarked for New York on the same steamer." He puts down memorandum, and asks abruptly: "Did you know Rufus Crashaw abroad?"

"No; why do you ask?"

"Because the man Craizon and Rufus Crashaw are one and the same; and the others who aided him are, M. Lugas, Jules Passauf and a man, whom as yet I have not been able to run down, by name, Tausig."

"Crashaw, Lugas?" She stares at him as if lost in amazement.

"These are the men. And now let me tell you so much as I can of their plot against Petralowski. You admit that he had powerful enemies in Russia?"

"I admit everything. The time for concealment is past. Basil Petralowski was my playmate in childhood, my comrade in youth. He was my only friend. I loved him, but I was a wife, and he was an honest man. We never met save in his mother's house and in his mother's presence. Prince Vidimei Orloff was all evil. He could not conceive of such a state of affairs. One day there was a terrible scene at the castle: he accused me of caring for Basil and I owned it, and gloried in it, and defied him. He threatened—threatened us both, but nothing seemed to come of it, and when, sometime after, Basil's mother gave a little note of farewell, and told me that he was sent to Prussia upon an affair of state, we believed it. It was only when he never came back, that we began to fear and doubt. Then the prince died. Ah, heaven! How plainly I see it all now. Upon his dying bed he told me that he was leaving me all his fortune, for he was certain now that when he was dead, I would be no more to Petralowski than to him. It was after that that I received those few words from this side

of the water. I see it all. They had sent him to Paris, and there accused him, and tried him and offered him the choice of coming to New York on a secret mission or of taking the black letter."

"What is that?"

"A death-warrant."

"Once here," she hurries on, "he learns for the first time what it is he has sworn to do. I wonder if you know how terrible their oaths are?"

"I think I do, but go on."

"He knew himself entrapped. He wrote me on the eve of that awful deed. He did not mean to escape. And if he had tried those men would have betrayed him."

"No doubt."

"But at last they are unmasked. Tell me, what were you about to ask of me when—?"

"When you turned upon me and took Crashaw and the rest under your protection?"

"Don't waste words," she cries impatiently. "What did—what do you want?"

"Are you ready to help me now?"

For answer she puts out her hand.

"You have yourself told me that in the organization which they represent here, you hold by recent appointment, a superior position."

"Yes," impatiently.

"Is it not in your power to depose, then?"

"I? Yes," reluctantly. Then, "Listen," she says. "Did you ever hear of one Sharlan?"

"Yes, he is the brain, the power, the leader of leaders; a wonderful man."

"At least he is not an assassin. He is devoted heart and soul to a cause which, mistaken or not, he believes in. This man is, as you say, the captain par excellence.

The master, he is called. Well this man is my friend; this man believes in me. It is because he believes in me, and because he has begun to doubt his agents here, that he has so lately put authority into my hands. I am frank; do you be the same. Will it really serve your purpose, be all sufficient, if I deprive these men of their power?"

"Yes, the rest I shall be equal to. Only give me time to remove an old man and a helpless girl, to get them into a safe shelter, and then the law can deal with these miscreants. I have enough proof against them."

"The law!" she cries aghast; "you would give them over to the law?"

"Why not? Are they too good for it?"

"Good! Bah! Tell me, how would the law punish them? the best and the worst?"

"They would be forced to leave the country at the least. Imprisonment perhaps for life, at most."

"And will that satisfy you?"

"To break up this dangerous band, to save those now menaced—to free Miles and Moina La Croix—that is all I dare wish for."

"And Rene Savareis?"

"I am that man's friend. He must not come to harm. But he is your friend and they know it. He is also Crashaw's protege."

"You talk of saving Miles and Moina La Croix," she says slowly. "Do you know that they are comparatively safe? It is to their interest to keep Miles La Croix as their nominal head. As for his beautiful daughter—" here she fixes her dark eyes upon his face—"they are not likely to harm her, so long as there remains a hope, a chance, that she may be forced or terrified into marrying Rufus Crashaw."

"Good heavens!"

"It is Rene Savareis who is in present danger."

"How? Why?"

"Because innocently, and to protect herself, Moina La Croix has begged him to stand between herself and Crashaw, in the character of an accepted suitor."

Swiftly the blood flows back from his face. He makes a sudden stride toward her.

"It is false!" he cries. "It is not true. Moina La Croix is—good heavens," trying to speak more calmly. "Pardon me and tell me what you mean."

She comes close beside him now, and lays a white hand upon his arm.

"At last we begin to understand each other," she says almost gently. "You must understand me. Moina La Croix is beautiful and good. She trusts Rene because she knows the secret of his unfortunate regard for my unworthy self. Her father has chosen to fancy them lovers, and has told Crashaw as much. Do you understand me now when I say that Savareis is in danger? Crashaw sees in him a rival."

"I do, and I see in this one more reason why we must act promptly. Once again, will you aid me as I wish?"

"I will aid you. Will you trust this business to me? Give me two days time, and let me act in my own way. I promise you that no more mischief shall be done."

"But are you sure? Are you strong enough?"

"Listen. I am telling you everything. My own authority did not come to me by post or express, but by the hand of an accredited messenger, Sharlan's confidential agent, known to these men as such. I shall call him to my aid. Together we can hold their hands. Meantime I shall make my report to Sharlan. By the

time his answer comes you will have rescued your friends the La Croix. Is not that best?"

"You promise me this?"

"This and more. By all that you have done for me, by my faith as a woman, by the memory of Basil Petralowski, I swear it."

CHAPTER LXIV

A MAD ERRAND

Keenly alive as he had been, from the first, to all that concerned Moina La Croix, the knowledge that Rufus Crashaw sought her hand, and that he was in a position to urge his suit, that it was in his power even to intimidate her, was as gall to Roger Drexel.

"I must see Moina," he says to himself, as he hastens to his rooms. "How will I take her from among these wretches, and who can help me?" And then in an instant he says aloud, "Madeline Payne, of course!" And so he hurries on once more to don the disguise of Captain Fernand, and in it to seek Moina.

"What will she say when she knows me as I am," he asks himself. And his heart answers, "love can not change, and she loves me."

He enters his room, and at once pounces upon a letter which he finds lying just inside the threshold, pushed under the door by some deft hand.

It is addressed in Kenneth Hosmer's hand-writing, and wondering what Ken can have to say so soon, he tears off the envelope and reads.

"ONE O'clock, A. M.

"DEAR GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER AND FRIEND:—After I left you I threw off my disguise with a big grunt of thankfulness, and, as it was yet early, I sauntered round to the hotel where Savareis was quartered. He was there, just as you had told me. Better still, for me, he was packing

a small grip, preparatory to leaving town. S— was wondrous glad to see me, and promptly told me why. He was going to Chicago, at an hour's notice, on business connected with the S. C. It was a trip under sealed orders. He was to be the bearer of certain packages, presumably of circulars and pamphlets for private circulation, and he was intrusted to find a companion for the journey, a 'brother' of course. When I heard his plaintive, 'Do go, old fellow, I don't know any men,' I 'attached' myself at once, and we go by a morning train. And now, you know as much about my flitting as I do: Chicago; no disguise, but assumed names, (mine is James Parrish.) Sealed orders; a secret delivery, sounds interesting doesn't it? 'We return,' says Savareis 'as soon as the business is done.' Good-bye, old man. No use my trying to see you. I know how busy you are now.

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES PARRISH."

"Gracious heavens!" ejaculates Drexel, dropping the letter and making a hasty metamorphose. "I must know what this move means!"

When he is once more disguised he consults a railway time-table which tells him that the first train for Chicago, a through mail, is probably leaving at that moment, and that another "limited" goes in a little less than two hours.

"They can hardly have gone by the fast mail," he muses hopefully. "I can make the next, I think, and see Moina in the meantime." And once more he sets out and drives at a reckless pace toward the new shelter of the La Croix.

It is Minna who meets him and her first words stir his heart.

"Oh, sir, how fortunate! Something has gone wrong!

I am sure, for Miss La Croix is walking the floor and looks like death and—"

He closes the door, brushes past her, and is in the little reception room before Minna can complete her sentence.

"Where is she?"

The words are heard in the dining-room beyond. He hears a low cry, and then Moina springs through the open door, her hands outstretched.

"Oh!" she cried, "Heaven must have sent you!"

Unmindful of Minna, he catches her in his arms, while she lets her pale face drop upon his breast, sobbing convulsively while yet striving bravely for self-control. A moment later, when she lifts her tearful face Minna is gone and the door of the dining-room is discreetly closed.

"Moina my dearest," he says, as he leads her to a seat and places himself beside her, "pray be calm—we may be interrupted at any moment."

"I know, I know; and everything depends upon you. Last night they were here, Crashaw, Lugas and Passauf, and they were closeted together a longer time than usual. And I knew by the occasional sounds from papa's room that something more than common was being discussed. I was very uneasy, for I feared some new evil, and my hands were tied. It was very late when they went away, but papa did not retire. Instead, he came out into the dining-room and walked and walked, and muttered to himself. Papa has not been as well as usual for two or three days. He is more nervous and excitable than usual, he eats nothing, and hardly sleeps. Of course I was anxious about him, but he would not let me approach him, or do more than bring him a cooling drink. His words, too, as I caught one now and then were startling; but so disconnected that I could only make wild guesses at their

meaning." She shudders and for a moment buries her face in her hands.

"Moina," he cries impatiently, "you know you are being tried beyond your strength. This must end, and I mean to end it."

"Hush," she says, putting out her hand. And then she hurries on. "He was even too preoccupied to notice that I was up, and I was too anxious and terrified to leave him for a moment. At day-light he was still awake but very weary as I could see. I had just coaxed him to take some coffee, and he was beginning to show signs of drowsiness when Rufus Crashaw arrived and again they conferred together for a long time. When he took leave of papa, who had followed him as far as the dining-room, I heard him say something about, 'going in person to make sure that the men were safely on board, and with their luggage properly stored.'"

She checks herself and listens for sounds from the rear room.

"I thought he was stirring," she says, "it did not take much persuasion to induce papa to lie down and rest after Crashaw had gone. I sat beside him and put my hands upon his head, as I used to do, and, in spite of his weariness, he was soon asleep. Oh!" wringing her hands, "it is too horrible! How shall I tell the rest!"

He takes the little trembling hands in both his own.

"Tell me all, dearest, it is best," he whispers soothingly.

And she goes on with her hands still in his.

"When I was sure he was asleep, I sat down beside him and began to stroke his hands. I meant to try once more to make him talk as I did before, you know. But I had hardly touched him before he began. This is what they are about to do: It seems that there has been a plot hatching for weeks, here, and in other cities. The

whole country is to be terrorized. They are only waiting the signal. At first New York was to give this signal, but that has been changed, and now it is to be Chicago."

"Chicago!"

"Yes. Oh, it is hideous! It seems that two or three open-air meetings have already been appointed in different parts of the city, and two or three men are to go from here to-day, in order to arrive in time. These men are told that which they are to carry, the packages you know, consist of books and circulars, to be distributed secretly among the initiated. These things are to be delivered to certain men who will await them, and they are really to contain—oh! it seems impossible!—they will contain infernal machines—explosive bombs such as have been used with such terrible effect in the Russian horrors, more deadly even than dynamite! And they are to be used to blow up and destroy the chief buildings, to throw the city in a panic, and the mobs will already be gathered to sack and rob, to attack the rich and splendid homes along the lake—"

"Great heavens!"

"It is horrible, and it was planned long ago. They have only waited to secure and safely store a sufficient quantity of the deadly explosive. They have all been prepared by two people, an old man and woman, foreigners."

"Oh! did you hear the names?"

"No, only that the old man is sometimes called the Spider."

"Moina," Roger exclaims speaking almost breathlessly, "my beloved, I believe God has ordained you an instrument in his hands to frustrate these fiends. I understand it all. And now you have still another ordeal before you. Can you endure it? I know to-day for the first

time, of Rufus Crashaw's persecution of you. And, knowing this, I must yet leave you alone and in his hands, almost at his mercy."

"Oh, where are you going?"

"After those men—to Chicago, of course. To save hundreds of lives, perhaps, with heaven's help and yours. Tell me, when did you see Rene Savareis last?"

"Not since early yesterday, and he promised to come to-day."

"He will not come. They have sent Rene Savareis to meet his death in Chicago."

'Rene! Oh, why! why?"

"Because Crashaw believes him to be your lover."

"Ah, heavens!"

"And with him has gone my dearest friend; gone, because I asked him to look after Rene Savareis. You see I must go."

"Oh yes, yes!"

"And a train, which they may take, leaves in less than an hour. Moina it is a bitter thing to say, but your father's safety and yours rests with you now. If you can hold Crashaw off, if he can be made to believe that in time you will yield, he will give you time. It is the only way. Can you endure it for a week? I will be back in that time, if I am alive. If not, you shall be rescued, I swear it. Others will take up my work where I lay it down. Moina speak to me."

"Go," she whispers hoarsely; "go. Save those people. I will endure it for your sake!"

He snatches her in his arms once more. "You have Minna," he murmurs. "Trust her."

The moments are flying. He presses one burning kiss upon her pale lips, tenderly places her upon the couch, and goes without daring to look back, and while his feet

go hastening down the dimly-lighted corridor, Moina La Croix rises to her feet, totters half-way across the floor, reaches out her arms, as if to clasp him and draw him back, and muttering an inarticulate moan, drops fainting upon the floor.

CHAPTER LXV

DISSETT

"This is dangerous business," Roger Drexel had said to Madeline Payne, months ago, when he brought her the cryptogram letter addressed to Dr. Clarence Vaughan. It is but wisdom to take all possible precautions. If I go abroad, you shall have a letter or message every month at least. If I am still here, but absent, or for any reason invisible for long, you shall hear of me every week. When there is nothing to say, and I simply wish to signify that all is well with me, I will inclose to you a blank sheet. But if at any time you fail to receive due notice from me, you will be at liberty to give this letter to Dr. Vaughan, and to tell him everything."

On the day which saw Roger Drexel rushing on board the west-bound express train, at the last moment, en route for Chicago, Madeline sat beside her dainty writing table running over in her mind the events of the preceding week and trying to guess what the complications could be which had delayed the coming of the weekly signal, which meant, when it meant no more, "All is well."

For the past two weeks they had meant nothing more, and this in spite of the fact that the previous missive, dated three weeks back, had something to say. It ran as follows:

"DEAR FRIEND:—While you seem to be comparatively out of an occupation, I am 'in the thick of it,' and hope before many days to have brought things to a crisis.

Do not abandon the princess. Unless I am much mistaken, she will yet turn to you for counsel and sympathy, and she will need it. As for Mr. Lord, he is quite safe for the present, I think. But upon no account must yourself or Mrs. Ralston return to that shelter yet. All is going well. Adieu. R— D—."

At the coming of the first blank note, one week after this animated note, she had been surprised and a little disappointed. The second had caused her some uneasiness. And now the seven allotted days had passed, and not even a blank sheet was brought to her door. It was with troubled face that Madeline unlocked the little private drawer where the cryptogram had been safely treasured, and laid it upon the table beside the other letters and papers. And now she realized with her growing anxiety for Roger Drexel was mingled a reluctance to summon Dr. Vaughan to her aid, good and true and ready to do her service though she knew him to be.

But Madeline Payne was brave and conscientious and in the moment when she fully realized this feeling and its cause, she crushed it back, and taking up her pen dashed off a brief note, in which she asked Dr. Vaughan to call upon her at the earliest possible moment. Having dispatched her letter she rang for her maid.

"Change my dress, Rose," she said.

"What will it be?"

"The white English gown with the soft lace *lingarie*."

"Oh, that English gown." Madeline was a woman, and she knew no fairer picture was ever seen by man than that which she made with her pale blonde loveliness and stately grace, set off by the simple elegance of the charming gown.

When all was done and she had scanned her image in the long mirror, she blushed rosily, and then cast a look of frank challenge, and these enigmatical words, straight

at the white-robed figure. "Why not then? It is not wrong! It is not unwomanly."

And while the lovely hue still dyed her cheeks, Rose entered and placed a card in her hand.

"Dr. Clarence Vaughan."

What an enigma is woman! In another moment Madeline was greeting him as frankly, as easily as if they had met in this manner always. In the same manner was her business told; and then he was seated beside a low table with Roger Drexel's cryptogram letter in his hand—

"Read it," she said, after her few words of explanation. "We can talk afterward."

Roger Drexel had scarcely turned his back upon her and crossed the threshold of her outer door, when the Princess Sacha summoned her maid. Through all that trying ordeal she had borne herself gallantly, but now she was fairly quivering with excitement and resolutely pent-up emotion

"My street dress; the plain black one," she said imperiously; "and hasten. I may be gone two hours."

Walking, swift walking would have best suited her mood; action, movement of some sort seemed a burning necessity. But the distance and her haste were too great. She could not reach her destination quick enough. So she took a carriage, and was whirled on her way. At the corner of two intersecting streets, in the quarter where "nobody" lives, the carriage halted, and the princess bidding the driver wait, walked briskly down a little court, to pause before a weather-beaten frame house, bearing upon its street door the familiar sign, "Furnished rooms to let."

Here she rang and was at once admitted.

"Is my uncle at home?" she asked of the woman who opened the door.

"Yes'm, and I don't think he's as well as usual. He'll be very glad to see you, I reckon, and—"

But the princess was already half way up the stairs, and in an another moment was standing within a large "front room," shabby yet comfortable, and evidently the constant abiding-place of a man who was accustomed to a bachelor existence.

"Madam!" ejaculates the man who hastens forward to receive her. "Madam, is it you?"

"Yes, Dissett, it is I. Close your door and arrange your screen, I have something important to speak of."

She has given him her hand as she speaks, and he knows that it is unsteady, and notes her voice quivering with suppressed excitement. Noiselessly he goes about doing her bidding and then proffers her his easiest chair. But she moves it away.

"Don't ask me to sit; not now!" she says; "and don't question me yet. Just answer."

He bows silently and stands expectant.

"Dissett," she begins, "I have trusted you and with good reason. I suppose that I know you better, know more of you than many, than most, but to-night I wish to know yet more."

"Ask, madam." He bows submissively.

"First, explain me this: When you came across the ocean in the same vessel with myself, although disguised and keeping aloof like a stranger, you told me, upon making yourself known, that you had come to serve Sharlan and the cause, and intimated that you were not at liberty to tell more—you remember?"

"I remember perfectly."

"When you came to me later, and presented that letter from Sharlan in which he bade me make use of you

as I might, could, or would, I was, as you may remember, inclined to look upon you as having been sent to keep up an espionage over me. And this explosion brought out your statement that you had been sent at your own request, and that while you were sincere in your belief that you could be of use, by giving information, based upon your point of view, which would supplement such observations as I could make from mine, you had still another object. Do you remember what you said then?"

"I told you that which from your patriotism, your loyalty to the cause, I knew that its interests were safe in your hands, here and elsewhere; I also believe that you had a double motive for coming to this country. Do you wish me to go on."

"I will finish. You told me that I was the friend of Basil Petralowski and his mother; and that you knew that the lady whom I addressed as mother, was Madam Petralowski; that you believed me engaged in an effort to learn the truth concerning his fate. And that because you had known both his father and his mother you would be glad if you could aid me in this. And then we came to better understanding, and became allies. But there was something else. You said that you hoped to find, here in America, a man who had once done you deadly personal wrong. And you vowed that to be the first object of your life, as to find Basil was the first object of mine."

"True; all true!"

"Have you found that man, Dissett?"

"A trace—yes. I have learned that he was, or is, in some way connected with one of the circles, and he has disappeared so completely that I imagine that he must have taken some other name over here. The one by which I knew him had become infamous."

"You knew of him? Did you not know him, then?"

"I never saw him."

"Dissett, tell me his name?"

"His name? The name by which I have traced him—Craizon. Madam, madam! what is it? Good heavens, what is it! Do you know this man?" And the impassible Dissett is electrified—is now a new being, quite as eager, almost as tremulous as she. And in the look which she turns upon him is a strange mingling of eagerness and triumph and fierce anger.

"Dissett," she cries, "tell me, I must know, how this man has wronged you?"

He recoils from her, a crafty look in his eyes. "But wait," he breaks in. "Do you know him. Is he, perchance, a friend whom you would warn?"

"A friend! Ah, heavens!"

The words and the look are answer enough.

"Tell me," she says instantly.

"I will tell you! This man, this Craizon, found my brother, my only brother, little more than a boy, at Kara. He, my brother, had been betrayed and had already served out five years; in two years he was to be released by special arrangement. The government had found reason to doubt his guilt. Craizon sought him out, obtained letters—poor Serge had a sweetheart in Moscow—and turned them over to the government—betrayed him. You know the penalty? Serge died in the mines; died horribly." He breaks off suddenly. What a strange look on a woman's face; not sympathy, but increased and triumphant hatred.

"Tell me," she fairly hisses as she clutches at his arm, "if you find this man, what, how can the law punish him here?"

"The law!" and the man's face is fearful to see. "Let me once find him," stretching out two clutching talon-

like hands, "and here is the law that shall avenge Serge Ivannovitch."

"I am here to tell you that," she cries, "Craizon the spy, Craizon the assassin, is known to you as Rufus Crashaw!"

"Rufus—Crashaw!"

"And the destroyers of Basil Petralowski; those who are within our reach, are Crashaw—Lugas."

"Ah, that man?"

"And Passauf."

There is a long moment of silence. Then Dissett asks, quite calmly—now that the worst is known, this strange man has suddenly regained his stolidity—

"You said, 'those within our reach.' Are there others?"

"Yes, but Prince Viadimie Orloff has passed beyond our judgment. There must be tools, too, in Paris and at Petersburg. But I fear they will not be easily traced. It was Craizon who followed Basil to this country, after they had bound him by a deadly oath in Paris. Sit down. No; first give me some wine, I feel strangely unnerved. Then I will tell you what I know."

And she did, omitting nothing. "You see," she said at the last, "I am bound to this Hurst, this detective. How well he has served us both; but for him you might never have learned that Craizon and Crashaw were one; and I might never have known how Basil had died." And now for the first time there are tears in this woman's eyes. "Ah, pitying heaven! To think that he heard his last words! that he pressed his hand at the last! You must see him, Dissett."

"I? Yes; no. I think my brain is turned. Yes; he has done us royal service. We owe him much. Tell me again, what does he require?"

"That I use my power to keep these wretches from other murders, which he believes are already planned—to force them to leave the country."

"But this is so strange! He has everything in his hands; why could he not denounce them to the authorities?"

"Because he is as anxious to save and shield Miles La Croix and his beautiful daughter, as he is to punish the others."

"I see; let me think." For some moments both are silent—then, "Do you agree with this detective?"

"Listen," she says her tone softening, "I have told you that Madam Petralowski is failing, but you can never guess how much. Once my hope was, to add to her interest in life, to lengthen her days perhaps, by bringing her, sometimes, good tidings of Basil. Now my one wish is to keep everything from her until the end."

The man sighs heavily, and his head sinks upon his breast.

"At first she was full of hope; but lately, as her hold upon life grows feebler, she seems to have been given the clear vision. She sees the truth but not in its horror."

All this has been uttered in short broken phrases, as their utterance was painful or difficult, and now she clutches at her breast as if the heart within could be held in check. "She must not know! It would be another murder. Yes, there must be no publicity, else all might be known to her. I look for help from you, Dissett."

"Ah!" These are evidently the words he has wished to hear. "Trust me. Is there a limit to the time within which we must act?"

"It must be soon. Three persons who are in their power are in hourly danger."

"What did you tell the detective?"

"I guaranteed the safety of all concerned."

He is upon his feet and is standing before her.

"Will you trust this to me?" he asks; "I believe I know how to deal with them, but I must have time to think. You shall be informed. You shall understand. I may even require your help. Give me one day." Their eyes meet for just one instant, then fall apart quickly. "Trust me," he urges, "they shall do no further harm."

CHAPTER LXVI

WHAT MINNA KNEW

"What shall be our first move?" It was Dr. Vaughan who asked the question, looking into Madeline's face as if he could find a certain enjoyment in anything which gave him such opportunity, grave though the occasion was.

She had told him the story of Roger Drexel's efforts, and her own share in them, beginning with the evening of the explosion in Elias Lord's vestibule, and stopping when she had narrated the incident of her call at the house on B— Street. All this she had set before him clearly and concisely.

"I have learned from the princess," she said, "of her 'compatriot', known as Captain Fernand Makofski. But disguised as he was, I could not mistake his voice, his carriage, nor the hand which I saw distinctly. It was Roger Drexel."

On the way to B— Street, Madeline uttered a sudden exclamation. "We are beginning wrong," she said; "being disguised, Mr. Drexel may not desire to see anyone; we may be refused admittance at the door. Let us try a ruse. Let us leave a note at the door for him."

This they did, giving the note to a boy. He returned shortly.

"It ain't no use, sir," he said, giving the letter back into the doctor's hands. "He ain't there, and he ain't been, the girl says, since last night."

"What shall we do now?" asked the doctor.

"You must let me try," Madeline replied. "If Moina is at home I may learn something. Suppose I leave you in the carriage while I make my call." At the end of half an hour she rejoined him, entered the carriage in silence, and said as the carriage rolled away: "If Mr. Drexel had not stipulated that we were not to call upon the police, except as a last resort, I should say, drive to police headquarters at once."

"Ah! You have not succeeded?"

"Worse, I found only servants in the house. Luckily Margot opened the door. She knew me, and was willing to talk. Captain Makofski—she knows him by no other name—left the house last night without a word to indicate an intended absence; and the La Croix, father and daughter, left this house more than a week ago. There must be something wrong."

Dr. Vaughan, who had thrust his head out of the window, caught a fleeting glimpse of a small figure and a grinning face in a battered cap. "What is it?" he called to the coachman.

"Some one's been following us, sir. He caught on behind. He's followed clear from B— Street, I think."

"And now he has got away," said the doctor, lightly. "Drive on, if you please. It was only some street arab. I saw him run."

But when they were once more on the way, he said to Madeline, "I shall go straight back to B— Street. That boy who ran away, was the boy who carried my note to the door. I can only explain his interest in us in one way."

"And that?"

"That his presence so near that door was not accidental. If he had been stationed there to report upon those who might call, it would account for his interest in us."

"You are right," said Madeline.

As yet the doctor had but one clearly defined plan, and this concerned the boy who had followed the carriage. If he was here as a spy, whose interest did he serve? It was an answer to this question which the doctor was seeking. He walked past the house, then crossed the street, resuming his surveillance from the opposite side. A full quarter of an hour had passed, the doctor pacing slowly up and down, when a cab came rattling up and halted squarely before the door, and, almost before the wheels had ceased to revolve, some one sprang out, and Vaughan could see as she ascended the steps that it was a woman.

The new arrival was kept waiting at the door, as Madeline had been, while Margot made her way up from the kitchen; Vaughan strode straight across the street, bent upon seeing this evening visitor before the street door closed behind her. But it was not to be. As his foot touched the pavement, the door opened and quickly closed again, shutting the visitor inside.

Baffled thus, an inspiration seized him. In a moment, doubtless, Margot would have conducted her visitor to some remote apartment. Madeline herself had been conducted to a small room in the rear, she told him, and Margot had explained that she kept the living-room locked by order of her master. He must see this woman's face then before she left the upper hall. In three bounds he was at the door and ringing a furious peal.

This time the door was opened very promptly. And then as he stepped quickly inside the vestibule he saw that only this was open, and Margot stood beside the closed inner door alone and barring the way.

"Good evening, Margot," he said with the frank smile that won him friends so readily; "I hope I did

not startle you. I am a friend of Miss Payne's and she has sent me here. Will you not let me come in a few moments?"

His smile and Madeline's name combined were sufficient to overcome Margot's wariness; she unlocked the door, and he saw standing within, in an attitude of waiting, the woman who had entered before him.

While Margot closed and locked the door, the doctor advanced, and standing directly under the rays of the single light burning overhead, removed his hat with a courtly gesture.

As he did so the strange woman took a sudden step forward, halted, looked again and then exclaimed:

"Dr. Vaughan! Oh, how thankful I am!" And then in answer to his look of inquiry, and with sudden repression, "You do not know me. But I have seen you;" and, then coming closer and lowering her voice to a whisper, "I am Minna, formerly Miss Payne's maid."

"Minna! Then this is a fortunate meeting. Miss Payne is very anxious to hear of Miss La Croix."

"What, is she not here?"

"No," cried Margot, letting the jealousy she had harbored against Minna burst forth, unmoved as she was by anxiety and weariness. "She is not here! Is this the way you look after my dear mistress? Where is she, wretch!" And she bursts into tears.

Minna looked at her without a trace of resentment.

"Poor girl," she says soothingly, "it has been hard for her." And then she puts a hand upon Margot's arm. "Margot," she says, "it may all come right. Where is Captain Fernand? I must see him."

And now the doctor interposes.

"Minna," he says, "I fear something serious has happened. I know from Miss Payne and from Captain Fernand just what your position is. Tell us what you mean.

You left here less than two weeks ago in attendance upon Miss La Croix. Have you been separated since?"

"If you know all that," Minna said quickly, "you know I was bidden be ever watchful of the young lady. And so I have been. To-night I was sent out on a shopping errand. It was M. Lugas who first instructed me to go, but he consulted Miss Moina, and she told me to do so. I went, and the commissions were so various that I was obliged to be absent about two hours. When I came back, all were gone, and I found this note." She placed a scrap of writing in his hand, which ran thus:

"Mr. La Croix and daughter were so suddenly called away that it was out of the question to wait for your return. You will remain at your post until you hear from them further, which will not be for some days. Inclosed find money which will be sufficient for present needs."

This missive began without address and ended without signature.

"And what do you think of this, Minna?"

"Simply that they got me out of the way so that they may get Miss Moina and her father more fully into their power."

The startling incidents of that eventful night were graphically portrayed by Minna, as well as the story of their removal to the new quarters, now so suddenly deserted.

"May they not have made their escape from these schemers?"

"No, she was upon her honor. But wait, you wish to hear of Captain Makfoski—he was in our rooms this morning. Oh, something has gone wrong. Last night Crashaw and Lugas were there, shut up with that sick old man nearly all night, and they had not been gone an

hour when he came—Makofski. She was in a terrible state of agitation, from some cause when he came; she had just returned from her father's room, and she flew to Makofski, looking almost as wild as her father looks at times. They talked very hurriedly, and as if the subject were something serious. Then he went away in great haste, and as he went I heard a fall, and found Miss Moina lying on the floor in a dead faint. After that, father and daughter both kept their rooms, until this evening, and now—well, the house is only a block away."

CHAPTER LXVII

PREPARING FOR THE FRAY

It was the morning following the singular interview between the princess and Dissett, and M. Lugas and his henchman Passauf had just parted after a long, and by no means satisfactory consultation.

"When I trust to my own instincts," Lugas had said half aloud, "I am never betrayed by them." It would never have occurred to this man to utter such a sentiment for the benefit of another; but he said it to himself quite as a matter of course. And as he spoke it was of Captain Makofski that he was thinking, for the disappearance of the captain had disturbed him as much as it had Madeline or Minna, but for a different reason.

If affairs had happened as they ought, he would know quite well where to look for Captain Fernand, and he could breathe easily at this moment knowing that he had no more to fear from that disturbing personage. But yesterday morning had come and passed, and there had been no stark and beaten dead men found in the little B— Street park.

That the attack had been carefully planned he knew. He knew, too, that the victim had gone of his own accord to the place which was to have been the scene of his execution; that the appointed assassins were ready and upon the ground.

And he also knew now, that the plot had failed.

The two assistants, who had loitered outside the park gate, ready to join in the attack at a given signal, had

carefully reported this failure, telling how, at the very moment of attack they had been seized by "half a dozen policemen" and imprisoned only to be turned loose in the morning as the victims of "mistaken identity." But where were Joseph Parker and his "partner?" Where was Captain Fernand? A visit to B— Street resulted in nothing. Clearly Captain Fernand had set out for the park at the proper time; clearly, too, he as well as Parker and the young mechanic had entered there duly, according to the program. Where were they?

From the first M. Lugas had recognized in Captain Fernand a dangerous force. He had foreseen all the difficulties likely to be up by the entrance of this strong spirit into the circle which, until his advent, had been a machine to be worked at his will, for it was his will which dominated all—even Crashaw and Passauf.

True, these two were registered as next in authority to Miles La Croix, but even this erratic visionary was overruled by his more plausible subordinates, so they in turn found themselves looking to him as to a leader. And M. Lugas was this or nothing. That Makofski and Joseph Parker, the condemned and his executioner had both disappeared at the same time and from the same place was cause enough for uneasiness.

But this was not all. Passauf had just furnished him with another cause, not connected, or so he thought, with the first.

"There is something else that troubles me," said Passauf when they had ceased to discuss the disappearance; "I met Dissett, Sharlan's confidential scribe, this morning. He seemed in great haste, and I could not get him to say anything except that he meant to see me again, and ask about Crashaw and you."

"After me? I don't know him."

"Well, he knows you. He's a deep man. Said he

had just landed in New York. I wish I knew what had brought him here."

"You seem to know him well."

"I do, or did. I knew him years ago, in Russia."

"Were you friends then?"

"At one time," growled Passauf, "we were fellow-prisoners." And as this had been a long conversation for this taciturn man, he brought it to an abrupt close by reminding Lugas that he was expected in another quarter of the city in half an hour.

"True," assented Lugas, and then he added: "Tell your patient, or rather mine, that he must make haste and get into his new quarter. The old woman should not be so long left alone."

No mention was made of Crashaw, and none was necessary. Both knew quite well that the "opportunity" which Lugas had predicted for him, not long before, had come, and that he was engaged in furthering or seeking to further his own interests.

Left alone again, this man of many resources sat down and pondered the situation. And out of his fertile brain was soon evolved a course of action.

"I'll go to the princess," he said. "I'll take the aggressive if need be." And then into his mind came a vision of their last meeting, and the terms upon which they had parted.

From the first there had been distrust between these two. She, upon learning of his activity in the circle, had doubted his motive, and openly expressed her doubt. And he, knowing her influence at court, with the "master" and his constituents, had chosen to doubt her loyalty, and had set afloat those whispers which Drexel had so cunningly seized, in order to give his first appearance under Miles La Croix' roof a stranger air of reasonableness. This had not been done however, until he had as-

sured himself, by a most humiliating test that to be one of the superior was not in the estimation of the Princess Sacha an "open sesame" to her smiles and social favors.

And yet in spite of all these things, M. Lugas had determined to face the princess in her stronghold once more.

When Dr. Vaughan arrived with Minna at the lately deserted rooms of the La Croix it was with the faint hope that he might find within some clue to their strange flitting. But no card, or address, or scrap of paper on the laden and littered table in Miles La Croix' bedroom could be converted into a hint upon which to act.

"They went hastily, that is evident," he said, "and unexpectedly, I am sure. See, he had begun an article, an address I should think, and left even his unfinished page and his scattering notes here. Is anything gone from the book case or desk, Minna?"

And then for the first time she noted that half a dozen books—she described them as 'long thin books'—were missing from behind the glass door of the little corner book-case.

"Records," murmured the doctor to himself. And this was their only discovery.

"I shall stay here," said Minna, in answer to a question, "at least until I hear either from Miss La Croix, Miss Payne or Mr. Drexel. I consider myself accountable, first of all to him. Some one will be sure to come back here; and here I stay."

"She is right," said Madeline when Minna's decision was made known to her. "Only she must have a companion."

"When the doctor had left Minna it was to go back to Margot, of whom he begged a night's shelter. And, much to her surprise, he chose the studio, with its two

AT LAST THE HEAD LAY AGAINST THE POST AND WAS STILL.

—Moina, p. 452.

front windows overlooking the street. And instead of a bed, an easy-chair placed directly before one of the windows. More than this, he beguiled her into intrusting the street door-key to his care.

"If that boy is watching this place," he soliloquized, "he will show himself soon. He can't watch here all night. Perhaps he has an alternate, and if that is the case, I may see them both."

His vigil was a monotonous one, but just as he was beginning to fight against encroaching drowsiness, a shadow stirred outside, and he pressed his face close against the pane. It was a small figure, and it seemed to be scanning the house as it slowly passed along the pavement on the inner side.

As it moved on he went to the window nearest the entrance, that he might catch a last glimpse of its slow promenade, and then to his surprise he saw it drop down upon the lowest step and lean against the stone post which supported the iron hand-rail.

Minutes passed thus. The figure outside seemed to droop more and more, as if overcome with sleep, until at last the head lay against the post and was still.

"He's asleep!" murmured the doctor, "and may be discovered by some stray policeman at any moment." Then he was seized with a bright idea. "I'll play policeman," he said, and in a moment he had slipped off his shoes and was out in the vestibule.

The door creaked a little in spite of him, but it did not arouse the seeming sleeper, who only stirred himself when the doctor's hand had closed firmly upon his collar.

"Not a word," said he sternly, and not a word did either of them utter until within the studio and the doctor had locked the door and struck a light.

Then for a moment the two surveyed each other with

mutual curiosity. At a glance the doctor recognized the boy who had carried his note and attached himself to Miss Payne's carriage later.

But when he demanded a confession, the lad scoffed at him. Threats and frankness alike were unavailing.

"Maybe I'm watching this house and maybe I ain't," he said, "any way you're a doin' about the same. Like I know what you're a lookin' for?" Dr. Vaughan was nonplussed; this boy might be in the employ of Drexel's enemies; he had already told the lad that he was in search of Captain Makofski, but to give his own name might be going too far. Neither could he say that he scented trouble or foul play; this might be simply to put the others on their guard.

"Listen, my boy," he said finally. "Tell me how much you are paid for watching here."

"Ten dollars a day," replied the boy with a malicious grin.

"Well, I can't quite believe that," smiled the doctor. "But I'll give you twenty dollars now, in your hand, if you will tell me who set you to watch here, and what you have found out. I shall know, mind, if it is not the truth."

"No, yer don't!" said the boy with a defiant sniff; "I ain't no sell out, you ken bet."

"Well," admitted the doctor, "I like you for that after all. But tell me this; why did you follow that carriage?"

"Look here, mister, you say you'll tell me something first.'

"What is it?"

"Tell me where that carriage was agoin', and I tell you why I followed it."

Vaughan pondered for a moment, thought it could do

no harm, and fell into the trap, "Very good," he said, "I agree.

"You first then; I'm square."

"The carriage," said the doctor, "was going straight to the Occidental Hotel."

"Ah!—gosh!"—the boy started and darted a keen distrustful look at the doctor. Something had worked a decided change in his manner and tone.

"Well?" queried the doctor.

"Well, I said I would, and here it is: I followed that kerridge to see where it was going, of course."

In spite of his anxiety and vexation the doctor laughed; it was clearly useless to prolong the interview. But before he let the boy go he repeated one of his first questions.

"Boy," he said, "did you speak the truth when you said you were not employed by Captain Makofski?"

"Yes, I did," he answered, but with another quick glance of distrust, "and I'll say it again, if you want to hear it."

Inwardly promising himself not to lose sight of this boy if he continued to haunt B— Street, the doctor returned him to his former place unto the door-step as quietly as he had brought him in, and with greater ease.

Madeline arrived in B— Street at an early hour, and found Dr. Vaughan awaiting her. He plunged at once into a recital of his night's adventures.

"I shall go to Minna at once," was her prompt comment upon the history of his interview with Minna, "and I think the boy knows something about the Princess Orloff."

"Will you go to see her?"

"If I go, it will be to tell her my story, and ask her what she knows of Captain Makofski—I think she knows him as Mr. Hurst—and of Moina La Croix. But first I must go to Minna."

CHAPTER LXVIII

ONLY A LOOK

On the evening of her visit to Dissett, Princess Sacha received a brief note from him.

"If you will be alone," it ran, "send me word; I must see you at once, and will follow this if the way is clear."

Promptly this word went back: "Come."

He came as promptly, and she started back at the sight of him. The Dissett she knew was always shabby, always stooped, and humble of aspect. The Dissett before her was scrupulously dressed, and held himself erect; his eyes were bright; his cheeks, so often likened to parchment had a tinge of color; his expression was alert, keen, animated, his lip was scarcely perceptible.

"My plans for revenge are working," he said. "They will all be ruined. This circle disbanded, they can no longer absorb the revenues of this order, and how else does Lugas live? Crashaw will lose still more. Exposed and driven out of the league, he will lose an heiress and a fortune to boot. Give me one week, and follow without question the instructions written there, and if after that, you are not satisfied—if you ask more you shall command all my service. I swear it."

"I am satisfied," she said.

Just as twilight was falling, she was called to receive a visitor who had, so the maid said, declined to send his name, but whom she recognized at once, from the maid's description, as M. Lugas.

"Madam," he began, "my errand is one of inquiry. I

gave you my assurance that only a matter of grave import would bring me here again. I have thought the disappearance of your compatriot, Captain Makofski, might come under that category."

"Am I to understand that my 'compatriot' is missing, then?"

"Yes."

"May I ask why you have seen fit to come to me?"

"I am not anxious to detain you, madam. It was necessary to state my fact, or so I thought. My question, and I ask it in the name of our order, is this: Madam Orloff, what do you know of Captain Makofski, and where is he now?"

She saw in this the man who had doubtless planned the horrible entangling net in which Basil Petralowski had become enmeshed, and did not reply. And then it came upon her that she had overrated her strength, that she must end this hateful scene, or throw off the mask and overwhelm him with denunciation. By a mighty effort she mastered herself, and, turning without a glance at him, she struck sharply the tiny bell beside her.

"Bring me the steel casket from my dressing-room," she said to the maid who answered the ring. When the casket was placed in her hands, "Go," she said to the servant, and at once unlocked the casket and threw back the lid. "You are about to be freed from a position which must, at times, have been quite too onerous," she began, every word seeming to cut the air, low as they were spoken. "Lest your zeal for Captain Fernand carry you too far, I make known to you now, what should have been and must yet be, brought forward later, and in the presence of the assembled supreme circle."

She dropped her hand into the casket as she spoke and drew forth what seemed to be a small globe with the map of the world outspread upon its surface in tiny

lines and figures the foundation of this globe, or that part representing water was inky black, while the earth was marked out in pale hues, and here and there on the surface of both hemispheres were tiny vivid dots of blood-red.

At the sight of this M. Lugas, the imperturbable, started, and his swarthy color changed

"Do you recognize this?" she asked icily.

He bowed his head.

She shut her hand upon it, and when it opened the globe also had fallen in halves, and from the hollow center she took a tightly rolled paper.

It was of a peculiar color and closely covered with writing like copper-plate, while at the top, were inscribed certain strange symbols and at the bottom it was stamped with a singular seal. Without leaving her chair she handed it to him. "Read it," she said imperiously.

He came forward and took it in silence from her hand. M. Lugas knew when speech was futile. Standing thus he read the document which gave to the Princess Orloff supreme authority over that portion of the Upper Circle and council which was authorized and supported by the powers abroad, bidding them surrender to her all books, letters and other documents, and to cease all action on behalf of the order, except as she should direct.

There was no disputing such authority. The strange symbolical globe, the cipher seal he knew only too well. He bowed and returned the paper to her hand.

"May I ask the reasons for this step, the charges, if any?"

"I am unable to go into details. But it is charged that your policy has not been what it was meant to be. That your cause has been one of unjustified aggressiveness. That deeds that have served personal ends and have ministered to personal greed, hatred and malice, have been done under the name of the council."

He put up his hand as if in deprecation. "Permit me to remind madam that I am not the chairman of the council. I can scarcely be arraigned for any deed done by the order, under the signature of the chairman."

"True." A strange smile flitted across her face. "Rest easy, the blame shall fall where it belongs." She checked herself suddenly. "You may inform your chairman, M. La Croix, that an inquiry will be made. As for Captain Fernand Makofski—"

"My anxiety concerning him is removed, madam," he said; "I begin to comprehend many things. As for myself—"

"As for you," she said slowly and with a gesture of dismissal, "you shall receive justice, ample justice. Do not doubt it."

When he had gone, she took out Dissett's written instructions and glanced at them hastily.

"I did not blunder," she muttered, "I only abridged. How can I face those men and not charge them with their crime!"

That evening Madeline called upon the Princess Sacha.

"My dear lady," she began, "I have come to you in great trouble. I hope to find a little help—a ray of light here."

And this is how it came about that an hour later, as Madeline was preparing to go back to Minna and her other cares the princess drew her into her own chamber and closed and locked the door. Her haughty head was bowed, her eyes were tear-worn, her manner was strangely sad and deprecating.

"Madeline Payne," she said, "you have been our good angel here, my good angel and I—oh, I was so alone! But for you I would be all alone. And yet you do not know me. You do not guess." Suddenly she summons all her resolution. "You have a right to hear the truth."

And sitting there with her hands held tightly between two burning palms, Madeline Payne listened to the strange, sad story of Sacha Orloff's love and loss, with nothing extenuated, nothing held back—listened and wept with her and for her, and gave her hand and her prayers and her pity when all was done. And so, when Madeline had gone, the Princess Sacha softened, unnerved, with all thoughts and schemes for revenge drowned by her tears, hushed by her sorrows and forgotten in her thankfulness—indited a hasty summons to Dissett.

He came promptly as before, and saw, with something like misgiving, the change in her face.

"La Croix and his daughter must not be left at the mercy of their enemies," he broke in sharply. "They are in hourly danger."

Then came the story of Madam Petralowski's sickness, and then his face blanched, and he set his teeth between the drawn lips.

"I can not see those murderers again," she cried; "it would kill me. Dissett, release me. Spare me this ordeal. I will give you the papers, the authority, everything, only—"

"What do you mean?" he almost hissed.

"Oh, don't you understand me? I want you to take my place—to—"

A strange, fierce light leaped into his face. "Do you mean," he whispered hoarsely, "that you wish me to act? To assume your authority?"

"Yes."

"All? In everything? You will leave the manner, the time, everything to me?"

"That is it; yes, yes."

"Not questioning? Asking only that the La Croix be spared and they be driven from the city before further mischief is done?"

"Yes."

"And you renounce for yourself, any other, any further vengeance? When the demands of this detective are satisfied, you will rest content also?"

"Yes."

In the depth of her own distress she failed to see the triumphant flash in his small eyes which came and was instantly concealed. "Then I must do as you wish," he said. "It is not what I had planned, for I wanted to see you crush them. But it shall be done and done well. Only grant me one thing, and you need never give this business another thought."

"What is it you want?"

"To see her."

"Now? It would not be safe."

"I will not speak to her. I do not wish that. Only one look."

"When you come for the papers," she said, "you shall see her if it is possible."

"It is only a look that I ask," said this strange man, turning away. "And—I shall want the papers to-morrow."

CHAPTER LXIX

MADELINE'S CHASE

While these things were happening in New York, Roger Drexel was speeding westward upon the fast express, filled with anxiety because of the new and awful danger into which he knew Hosmer and Savareis were unwittingly plunging. At the most, he thought, they could only be ten hours ahead of him, but ten hours in Chicago, expected perhaps and ladened with a quantity of infernal machines. "Great heavens! what disaster might not overtake them in ten hours." And he was totally uninformed. When were those meetings to be? And how was he to conduct his search that it might be both quiet and quick?

Another thing that had caused him much perplexity was his neglected letter to Madeline. At first he had thought to telegraph from the nearest station, but he knew that the message would be more than twenty-four hours late, and that Madeline in all likelihood had already put Dr. Vaughan in possession of his cryptogram letter. "Where will they begin their search," he said to himself. And then came the thought of Moina and Minna. They would seek Minna and must go of course to the house in B— street, and he drew a great breath of relief.

He could trust Madeline, once on the track, to find Moina's new abode, aided by Minna and the boy "shadow" he had left in B— street, and so he felt sure Moina would find a friend.

And then he quickly decided that things were best as they were. The time for the denouement had arrived; all must come out once he was back in New York. He would not telegraph, at least not until he had reached Chicago.

In the gray of the morning, Drexel aroused himself from a long sleep. It was almost day and Chicago would be reached in six hours. And then he became conscious of a stir and growing tumult about him; bells and whistles began their noisy din and died away in a forlorn wail. And then came a crash—the sound of splintering timbers—and he was thrown back with unpleasant force by the sudden stopping of the sleeping car.

Carelessness on the part of some one, a morning fog and a sharp curve and a "wild" freight train had combined to stop the express after it had dashed frantically into the rear of the aforesaid freight train, to create a wreck and to delay Roger Drexel until perhaps—as he turned cold at the thought—he might be too late.

Madeline had decided upon her course before seeking the princess, and she found nothing in the strange sad story of the latter to cause a change in her plans.

She had put Minna in her present position and she now determined to bear her company. She believed with Minna, that sooner or later some one would come to them, who willingly or unwillingly, would lead them to Moina. She easily arranged all things at her hotel, and leaving in charge and at the disposal of the afflicted princess, the maid who had superseded Minna, she went out from that place to assume again a role she had played successfully years before, in the days of her own life's tragedy.

It was to B— Street that she went first. She entered the house as Madeline Payne, a lady of fashion in dainty array. At the end of an hour, during which time she had

been closeted with Margot, she emerged, but it was not as a fine lady—not Madeline Payne. The young woman who came forth and drove with utmost haste to the abandoned suite of rooms in the little court where Minna waited alone, was a trim, tidily dressed servant-girl, with thick black locks lying low on her forehead, a mottled complexion and pale-tinted eyeglasses partially concealing a pair of inflamed looking pink-lidded eyes. "You need never be afraid, miss," said Margot at the door; "nobody will ever know you—not even Miss Moina if you were to see her, and that bit of cotton just makes you look another shape altogther."

Minna was expecting her mistress and was prepared for her disguise, but when Dr. Vaughan arrived not far behind Madeline herself, and surveyed her in her new character, his anxiety and his opposition were aroused afresh; at last he won from her two concessions. First, that he might place a guard outside in the little court—a man who was simply to be in readiness in case of need, but was to take no step except at the word from Madeline and this man was to be one of his own choosing. Second, recalling the fact that Drexel had told her of a certain man or men whom he commanded at need, and who belonged to the city force, she agreed with the doctor that it would be best to apply to the chief of police as to a friend to Drexel, and not in his official capacity, for the names of these men. And this accomplished, Vaughan set out at once for the office of the chief whom he knew very well; and to her all was plain sailing, the instant the chief knew Dr. Vaughan as the friend of "Hurst" and acting with authority from him.

"Yes," said the chief, "I know the man you want and think he is within call."

And in another ten minutes the doctor was face to face with Little Norton.

They were two straightforward men, and they soon understood each other.

"Doctor, I know all about it," said little Norton in his characteristic way. "Hurst said to me, 'Norton, if things get wrong at any time, and if my friend, Dr. Vaughan comes to you for information, remember that he acts for me, and be perfectly frank with him. He may need your help.' Now do you?"

But Norton's knowledge of Drexel, like his own, ended after the attack in the little park some three days since.

As the result of this interview it was Little Norton himself who took up his station in the little court after having seen Madeline and arrived at a mutual understanding with her.

But before he began his watch there, Vaughan took him to B— Street to settle, if possible, a question of identity —the identity of the boy "shadow." Some time passed before they were favored with a sight of the lad, but at last he came into view, and then little Norton broke into a low laugh.

"So that's the boy you've collared and dragged in here?" he asked, for they were in the B— Street studio by Margot's kind permission; "if he's watching this house, it's for Hurst; he's a lad of Hurst's own training."

And before he went away he had estasblished a better understanding between Vaughan and the boy, one which left Vaughan free to attend to his patients at the Occidental, assured that nothing would go amiss in B— Street.

The next morning found Madeline refreshed by a long night's repose, and ready in her servant's gown, for whatever might happen. The better to understand what is to follow, let us go half a dozen blocks to the westward of this little court, and pause at the corner where a big

lager-beer sign arches the pavement. It is a corner saloon with convenient doors on two streets, and through one of these doors—that one opening upon the busiest thoroughfare—at the very hour when Madeline and Minna are breakfasting, there enters a trim little man, who glances quickly about him and then seats himself at a table, aloof from the others, and within sight of the lesser door of entrance. For ten minutes he watches this door intently, and at the end of that time is rewarded by seeing it swing inward. He does not stir while the person who enters walks the length of the saloon and he is silent when the new-comer drops into a chair opposite him.

"Well, Passauf," said this last arrival in a surly tone, "I am deuced glad you are here! What did that message of yours mean? To get a man out at such an hour as this!"

"We have not exactly the time for taking our ease," replied Passauf. "I have seen Dissett again. And I am to see him once more, in two hours. I don't pretend to understand it, but he is willing to meet you, and hear what you have got to say before the regular hearing. That is, he'll see you alone, with the understanding that you, yourself, bring in Lugas afterward."

"Did he appoint a place?"

"Yes. Your own rooms. He is to be there at eight, precisely. You are to tell Lugas to join you at ten; not before."

"Humph! No one ever knew Lugas to be either ahead or behind a fixed time. That man is a machine! And what are you to do?"

"I have the honor of bringing Dissett to your door. One thing we ought to have; the old man's book. Did you get it?"

"Hush. That's the mischief and all. Do you know

there has been a blunder? That book was not brought away with the others."

"Then it must have been left in the other house. It must be got."

"Gad! man, you don't intend to let Dissett see that, I hope?"

"No; but nobody else must see it. Don't you understand me? Does Lugas know that book was left behind?"

"No; not yet."

Jules Passauf half arose. "We must go and get that book before he does. If it comes to close quarters, you understand who M. Lugas will look out for. Come, there won't be any trouble. I'll get the book if you want. There's no risk, yet."

"I dare say you are right," agreed Rufus Crashaw.

The rooms lately occupied by the La Croix were on the third floor facing the front, and it was easy enough for Passauf to inquire of the care-taker on the first floor, and so assure himself that Minna was alone, "exceptin' of another girl that has come to keep her company like."

Minna admitted him promptly and would have been voluble in her welcome, but he cut her short and made his way toward the rear rooms, scarcely deigning to glance at the "girl" who was at the moment "keeping Minna company," in the little reception room. He had come for some articles for M. La Croix, he said, as he brushed past Minna, and he could find them without troubling her. And then he closed the bed-room door in her face, shutting himself in. Almost simultaneously the occupant of the reception-room sprang to her feet, and, with a few quick motions, divested herself of the skirt and blouse of dark blue print, which she had worn above a seersucker gown, such as are worn by trained nurses, and, catching up from a convenient and obscure corner

where they lay in readiness, a hat, shawl and small covered basket, she slipped noiselessly out without exchanging a word with Minna, who stood guard at the dining-room door.

It was a long quarter of an hour before Passauf emerged, and then he came empty-handed and hastened away without noticing a youth with a shabby bundle under his arm whom he passed just at the door, nor the trim maid in seersucker who came out from the court just behind him.

He walked on briskly for two blocks and then turning a corner, halted and accosted a man who stood looking up the street as if waiting for a down-town car. Madeline paused to look in at a shop window and the youth with the bundle passed her slowly.

"Follow the small man," she said without turning her head.

With a word and nod Crashaw turned and walked down a side street and Madeline keeping as near him as was safe followed unhesitatingly. "It is Rufus Crashaw," she said to herself, "who is most likely to lead me to Moina La Croix."

Rufus Crashaw plodded on steadily and without haste. His head was bent, as if he was pondering, and from time to time he gave an impatient swish with the small and limber cane which he carried. In his self-communings he has quite forgotten to be cautious, or perhaps he feels safe in this out-of-the-way quarter. Two or three times he turned a corner, each turn taking him into a worse neighborhood.

For more than an hour Crashaw walked on; finally at the opening of a short street which was narrow and crowded with tumble-down tenements, he paused abruptly and looked about him. It was a very hasty glance and

Madeline who was walking behind two portly German women, was quite concealed from his view.

Crashaw has gone half the length of the street and he stops and again looks about him. This time she is in full view and scarely half a block away. There is no alternative, and she does not falter an instant but bears straight toward him, her basket held conspicuously before her.

He does not wait for her to pass. Instead he goes out of sight down an alley.

Has he turned aside to see her go by? she wonders, and walks on without changing her pace.

She is at the alley now and what she sees causes her heart to jump. The houses on either side are quite new, and straight across the alley, blocking it up, half-hidden amidst tall fences and rickety out-buildings, stands an old weather-beaten cottage that had evidently been moved back to make room for one of the new buildings, and Rufus Crashaw is just vanishing from sight behind the fence that half conceals the cottage door. Instinctively she stops an instant, and that instant sees the top of the partly concealed door open and close again quickly.

CHAPTER LXX

MADELINE AT BAY

Quick as thought Madeline sprang across the alley and entered the cottage before which she stood. In the front room two men were at work upon the ceiling.

Madeline saw that the house was for rent and asked permission to look at the rooms. The workman was more than willing to talk, and she soon drew from him the fact that the unfinished cottage and its mate across the alley were owned by the same person, and that the unfinished cottage, although still labeled 'to rent,' was in reality taken.

"It was rented a week ago," the man said glibly, "and why the folks don't move in, is more than I know."

A week ago! Madeline's thoughts flew fast. With both these concealing cottages unoccupied, what an isolated place that rear cottage was.

"I hain't even seen nobody but an old woman in the other house there," said the man.

Madeline thanked the man and took the name of the owner, and his address.

At a drug store she purchased a flask of brandy, and some carefully weighed-out powders of morphia; and at a gunsmith's she bought a revolver with six chambers, which she loaded with her own hand. Then she went straight back to the street of the hidden cottage.

Madeline Payne had taken a bold resolve; and it led her straight to the cottage door. She was determined to find Moina if possible.

She knocked at the door. There was a moment of waiting, then she heard a key turning in the lock, and the door opened a little way. She was close against it as it moved inward, and assuming a frightened expression she flung her whole weight against the door, and in spite of some resistance, was inside and standing in the middle of a bare and dismal room, before the woman who had opened the door had removed her hand from the latch.

And then while the woman glared, unable to stem the tide of her speech, Madeline with staring eyes and lively gesture, began to talk in French. Volubly at first, then pausing as the woman made an impatient gesture, and then as if recovering her self-possession, after a severe fright, began again in English.

"I am sure I beg your pardon," she said. "I always speak my native language when I am excited, and really those men out there! They must have been drunk, I think!"

The old woman strode toward the other door with hand outstretched. In another instant that was tightly shut but not until Madeline had seen Moina La Croix, Moina beyond a doubt, but what a face! So pallid, so woful, with such a strange wild look in the hollow eyes.

"Who are you?" asked the old woman.

"The nurse of course."

"You are not wanted here. Who sent you?"

Madeline took on a tone of offended dignity.

"The head surgeon. I suppose you can see that I am a trained nurse."

"You may be a trained nurse," said the old woman, "but you are not wanted here. You've made a mistake, and you'd best go." There was a threatening note in her tone.

"My good woman," she said with a touch of patronage

in her tone, "I dare say you mean well, and have good reasons for being over-cautious. I am here to take care of an old man who is sick and nervous, and I don't think I've made a wistake in the place. The person who sent me is a tall dark man with an arched nose and dark eyes set very deep in his head. He wears a tuft on his chin and a long, pointed, black mustache; he looks—" with a sudden start, and a keen glance at the old face— "he looks like you."

Madeline had described M. Lugas.

"Who are you?" cried the old woman. "And what do you know of my—of him? Do you think he will trust you sooner than his own—sooner than me? Why did he send you here?"

"He said because the case was urgent and there was no one else, and because I was a nurse, I am to stay here; you are to leave. I don't care about staying here —and I don't feel like having any more of your insolence. I'll go back and tell my gentleman that you won't hear me."

"No," said the old woman sullenly. "I don't understand it. There has been different plans laid down only to-day, but come on."

In another moment, Madeline was in the presence of Miles and Moina La Croix.

"Here are the patients," said the old woman; "Now you can begin to cure them." She busied herself about the table. "If you can get that girl to eat, you'll do more than I can."

Madeline had provided herself with sundry vials of simple homeopathic remedies, and she administered some of them to the old man, who took them obediently and then went on with his rambling, meaningless talk.

Her heart was aching for the poor girl upon the couch, and she was trying to devise some expression,

some form of words, by which to address Moina and so arouse her attention, when a boisterous knocking at the door caused the old woman to start.

Madeline's heart beat fast. She knew, whoever it might be, it was not likely to be M. Lugas, and it might be that she would find herself entrapped and among enemies. With a swift movement she crossed the room and seated herself beside Moina, at the same time slipping a hand into the pocket where the loaded pistol lay. She heard the door open, a sharp exclamation from the old woman, the shutting of the door, and then the exchange of hoarse half-whispers. Madeline put out her hand and clasping one of Moina's, she whispered close to her ear.

"Moina, be calm. Don't start nor scream. I am a a friend—a friend of Captain Fernand's."

The girl shuddered. "He is dead," she faintly moaned.

Madeline began to understand. "Be brave," she whispered again. "Do not believe it. We have no proof that he is dead." "I am Madeline Payne. Courage; I do not believe he is dead. Hush! Close your eyes, they are coming."

Her hand went back to her pocket. Moina's eyelids fluttered and closed. In the little bedroom Miles La Croix muttered on. And from the outer room entered, following close behind the tall old woman, a small man with a repulsive face, ragged, unkempt, and carrying his arm in a sling. It was the Spider. "So," he said, pausing before Madeline and leering hideously—"so, this is the young lady that has got into our den under false pretenses, eh? Sent by Lugas, was she? You and I can't both be messengers of Lugas.' Shall we try conclusions? This is a bad place for a spy; a very bad place."

He thrust his grimy left hand into his breast, and the

woman began to move toward the two girls from the other side.

The couch stood in a corner, and by turning in her chair Madeline could command two sides of the room.

She did not rise, but as the man uttered his last word, the glittering little six-shooter suddenly confronted them.

"Stand back, both of you!" she cried. "I can help call by firing a shot. I don't think you care to have the police here!"

A sound behind her caused Madeline to start and turn. Too late! something black and stifling came down over face and shoulders, she was forced backwards and down upon the floor, and something cruelly hard and heavy was forced against her mouth. She struggled fiercely, bravely, but she felt the stifling sensation and the gag supplemented by a hand upon her throat and a knee upon her breast; then all become black around her; she knew no more.

CHAPTER LXXI

THE DAGGER AT LAST

It is evening and Rufus Crashaw sits alone in his room, waiting the coming of Dissett.

All has not gone as he had planned when he left the English shores for America less than a year ago. He no longer pins his faith to the council, he knows now that the power is about to fall from the hands of the three who have wielded it so ruthlessly.

"Miles La Croix' guilt will be proven by the fact that he fled and is not to be found even by his fellow councilmen. And Lugas—well, it will be a case of his word against theirs, two against one. The hour is come and with it comes Dissett, conducted by Jules Passauf who, understanding his role, leaves him at the door.

The man who enters is very grave.

"M. Rufus Crashaw," he begins, "I hope you know perfectly why I am here, and how absolute is the power put into my hands, first, by the master across the sea, and last by the lady who represents him here."

Dissett takes some papers from his pocket and refers to one of them. His face has not relaxed.

"Let me tell you of what you are accused with the others. First, of placing Miles La Croix nominally at the head of affairs and then so working upon his mental and physical infirmities as to cause him to do your wills at a time when he was really not responsible for his acts. Second, for misappropriating funds collected for specific uses, and for causing other funds to

be raised for fictitious purposes. Third, that instead of trying peaceful measures, the aggressive policy has been pressed to the utmost, and lives taken. And all because this was the policy which brought in largest revenue and rendered the chance of inquiry into matters financial improbable. It is said that even now there is a list of 'condemned,' passed upon and to be dispatched in the near future. That these plots and schemes extend beyond this city. That a great outbreak has been planned, a dynamite plot, menacing lives and property. And that when this begins, and while the attention of those who might otherwise interfere is directed elsewhere, two or three men having obtained control of the funds, intend to seize them, enrich themselves and leave their dupes to suffer."

The sweat is standing out on Crashaw's forhead. He has not anticipated this and it is all true.

"You are disquieted," continued Dissett. "You are thinking of this expose. Be at ease; I do not intend to make you suffer for the misdeeds of the council. There are greater sins than these."

"Shall we smoke?" he asked abruptly.

Crashaw assented, and Dissett produced a large cigar-case, filled with small, fragrant, pale cigars. He gazed at them for a moment and a cold glitter came into his eyes as he held the case toward Crashaw.

"I want to tell you a story," said Dissett. "I had a brother in the mines of Russia. He was to have been released soon, but he was burning to send a letter to his sweetheart, who had been faithful through years and trouble. And he so wrote a letter and intrusted it to a man, an Englishman like yourself—a tourist, who pitied him and won his confidence, who took charge of his letter and gave it—ah! he gave it to a tender sweetheart! He was a government tool, this man—"

Crashaw started and the cigar almost dropped from his hand. He could feel the eyes of his companion burning into his face, and to conceal it as much as he might, he replaced the little cigar and began to puff vigorously, sending up the white smoke again in pleasing circles.

"He gave that boy's letter," went on Dissett in a metallic voice, "to the post commandant—he could not wait for his reward of paltry roubles. And poor Serge! Do you know how they punish convicts in the Kara mines? Ah! my brother's blood is upon the head of that English spy!"

He put his cigar from between his fingers. It had not been even lighted, and again he eyes his vis-a-vis keenly. This time Crashaw did not look up. He smoked steadily; his cigar was more than half gone.

"When Serge died," said Dissett, "I took a solemn oath to hunt the world over to find that man and to be revenged!"

Crashaw's cigar grew suddenly dim. His face was deadly pale.

"Rufus Crashaw," cried Dissett, "why should I concern myself with your later treacheries when long before I knew you a traitor to your cause, I held you already condemned?"

His hand went swiftly to his breast, and with eyes that seemed to dart flame, and cheeks wherein the blood seemed to be congealed in great purple spots, with yellow teeth showing through the drawn lips, like the fangs of some ravenous beast of prey, he stood gazing down upon his face. Suddenly the hand flashed out and downward, and in the center of the table, upright and quivering in the wood, stood a long, slender dagger. It was directly before Crashaw, and much nearer to him than to the man who had thrust it there. But Crashaw

never stirred. Never in his life had he been more clear headed, more keenly alive to all about him, more mentally alert than at that moment. All that he had done, and left undone, all his crimes, all his risks, his hopes and fears, seemed to pass before him in lightning-like panorama. The full meaning of the dagger, vibrating before his fascinated gaze was clear to him.

He knew that they were alone, these two, and that Dissett was the elder and smaller. All this he knew, but he never stirred nor spoke.

"How many murders have you to answer for?" went on the terrible voice. "There is Serge and Basil—it is for them you are punished now. In some other world you may perhaps answer for the rest. For that old man who died because he looked too much like Lord, the banker; for the poor servant who was killed in the banker's bed. Yes, I know it was Basil who struck the first, but it was you, and Lugas and Passauf, who planned the deed, and forced him to its execution. It was Tausig, 'The Spider,' who killed the footman, but it was you three again who planned it. And how many times did you attempt the life of the man you call 'Fernand Makofski'? Once when 'The Spider's arm dropped, broken by a blow from the captain's loaded cane. Once when you had penned him six to one, in a deserted house, as you thought, and when a frail girl thwarted you. And again when you set your tools upon him in the little park. Shall I tell you why your emissaries failed? Because one of them was a clever amateur detective, interested in hunting you down. Why did you and Lugas distrust Makofski? Ah, you feared him because you thought him too loyal to the cause to which you were unfaithful. What would you have done could you have known that he too, was a skilled detective, hunting you down. And that Captain

Makofski has been in an honored grave for years. Will it please you, perchance, to learn that madam la princess, who knew all this, permitted it because—this same detective was hunting you! Yes! Rufus Crashaw, the man who traced you step by step as the murderer of Basil Petralowski is the man whom you knew as 'Captain Fernand.' You have woven a net to entrap poor Moina La Croix, and you have plotted against Rene Savareis, because you believed him her lover. Fool and blind! Her lover, and the man she loves is 'Captain Fernand!'"

Something like an electric shock passes over the frame of Crashaw. He uttered a sound that was almost a howl. For the first time he essayed to rise and his hand went out toward the dagger still upright in the wood. But it was a fruitless effort. At the first movement a trembling hand seized him, and strange darting pains shot through his body. His hand fell nerveless, even the fingers refusing to do his will. Strange lights flashed before his eyes. There was the sound of a cataract in his ears. Yet, through it all his mind worked strong and clear. At last he found his speech.

"Fiend!" he cried, "what have you done to me?"

"I have avenged Serge and Basil! I have kept my oath! I have finished my life's work! My cigars are powerful, Rufus Crashaw. They come, as I told you, from Russia, and they have been steeped in the juice of a death-dealing herb that grows about Kara, nourished, no doubt, by the blood and bones of prisoner's betrayed!"

The wretch in the chair writhed and lifted up his impotent hands. The strange drug was doing its work; he was powerless to do more than move slightly now; and fierce, rending pains were shooting through his body.

The clock stands opposite. He can count out the minutes left to him—very few now. Once, he makes, or thinks he is making a frightful effort to call out, or

stir. Then he realizes how useless it is. Still the visions throng before him. The face of Moina La Croix, as she looked when he told her that Makofski was dead, rises white and awful, and he tries to avoid its gaze. He drops his eyes and sees, there, just before him, two cigars; two of the Russian cigars steeped in the weed of Kara. Then an awful sensation comes over him, a crashing and rending. There is a convulsive movement; he falls forward and his head rests on the table, close beside the fragrant cigars, the weeds of death.

Dissett goes swiftly out from the great building, and is at once joined by Jules Passauf.

"You are to go to M. Lugas' apartments at once," he says. "You are to enter and leave upon his table this." He draws Passauf toward a ray of shining lights and flashes a long slender dagger before his eyes. Its effects are magical. Passauf is reduced to abject, terrified compliance. "When you have done this, you are to take a message to madam, the Princess Orloff. But first tell me where is Miles La Croix and his daughter?"

Passauf tells him reluctantly.

"And now come, I have a carriage near, for I don't trust you over much, Passauf. Great is your present danger; you might think you could escape me. I am going to see that you deposit the knife, and deliver the message. Then you are free to go. But remember, you must not be in this city when the sun sets to-morrow. Come!"

Expecting to meet Dissett, the man who was now his authorized superior, and wondering not a little what might be the outcome of their meeting, Lugas approached the door of Crashaw's apartment and tapped lightly. He found Crashaw dead. He looks about him. Then

he takes up one of the small cigars, looks at it, smells it. M. Lugas is a connoisseur in cigars. A moment he inhales the strong perfume, and then takes up the second cigar and thrusts both into his pocket. Now he turns again to the dead man, and coolly begins to search his pockets, inspecting everything and returning his watch, money, sundry letters and papers, all in fact save two or three thin, folded papers and a bunch of keys.

Then he leaves the place. His rooms are not far from those occupied by Crashaw, and he is already half way there. With the smile of triumphant cunning still upon his face, he pauses at a corner and takes out one of the little cigars. Puffing vigorously, he strides on through the cool night air and is soon fitting the key in his own door. He enters the room with quick step and turns up the burner over the reading-table.

Never before, not even when he stood beside the corpse of his confederate, when he caught that haunting death look, was he as pale as he is now. And yet there is no corpse here, no sign of human presence except—there directly underneath the lamp, quivering in its gleam, is the dagger in the wood! Up to that moment he has not ceased to smoke, but now he removes the weed from his mouth—it is almost consumed already—and slowly seats himself with his eyes fixed upon the gleaming knife. There he sits thinking, thinking. How has this deadly messenger come? No one save Passauf has access here, and it cannot have come through Passauf. Upon Crashaw, whose normal mental processes were slow, the fatal drug had acted as a mind stimulant. Strange as it surely was, upon this man of alert mental habit, its action was not the same. His thoughts come slowly, laboriously, and seemed to repeat themselves over and over. But he was not yet beaten, or so he tried to assure himself. He would make one more effort and

he would go, as he had meant; yes, just the same only he would go doubly armed and in a carriage all the way. He must secure the signature of Miles La Croix. And then came the attempt to rise, the strange sensation in his head and limbs, the rending pains.

But M. Lugas is a physician trained, and he knows when he has repeated the effort to rise and failed again, that he has been poisoned. Poisoned, yes, but how? He lifts his hand with the cigar stump still between his fast numbing fingers, glances at the dagger before him, remembers the scene in Crashaw's room. He sees again the two cigars as they lie on the table, and he knows that Crashaw has not died of apoplexy.

Dissett, Dissett the emissary, is the executioner.

Once again he attempts to rise, and fails. Then with the look of a baffled fiend, a look of frenzy and of fear, he lifts his hand. It obeys him still, he puts it behind him and draws out a pocket revolver. At least he will not die by inches, he thinks, and raises his hand. Then over that dark face, now corpse-like and awful to see, comes a look of horror unutterable, and hideous imprecations fall from the stiffening lips, as the fingers refuse to press the trigger, and the weapon falls from his grasp.

What this man was and is, is written on his face in this awful last hour, and the end comes slowly. Death is merciless; draw the curtain; leave them alone together.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE HAYMARKET

Evening in Chicago.

The fair city is aglow with light, palpitating with life. Everywhere there is the unusual stir of the early evening when the pleasure-goers are all abroad. And in one part of the city there is more than the usual stir. At Randolph Street and the thoroughfares adjoining, as we near the bridge and pass over it, men are hurrying along singly and in groups, and all, or so it would seem, going in one direction, westward.

Crossing the bridge with many others is Roger Drexel; he is walking apart as much as may be, and is evidently alone.

He has dropped his attire of fashionable cut and make and is roughly dressed like some artisan in his working clothes. His face is grave even to anxiety, and he glances about him constantly, scanning each passing face. He has been in Chicago some thirty-six hours—after having been delayed ten—and in spite of sleepless effort he has found no trace of Savareis and Hosmer. He had visited all the haunts where they might naturally appear, has searched hotel registers, has sent out detectives in plain clothes, but all to no purpose. And now he is hurrying toward that spot which is neither court nor square—that great oblong open space where the street widens out, to narrow again suddenly at an intersecting street. Homely ground enough to-day; unhonored and unsung, with no lofty palaces to serve as landmarks; a place of

homely sights and often of unsavory smells; a "lowly mart of trade;" and yet a place which in one short evening is to become historical—the scene of a world execrated crime, a widely lamented tragedy—the Haymarket.

Already the street is filled with a surging crowd, and here and there a blue-coated officer is seen silently watchful.

As he nears the edge of the restless mass, Drexel slackens his pace and glancing about him, comes to a halt. There is nothing to be seen here and little to be heard, but it is a good place for a rendezvous and that is what it is.

He has hardly halted before a man has joined him, and before they have exchanged greetings, another approaches.

"Well?" says Drexel at the approach of this second man, "what is it?"

"Nothing more sir, I'm sorry to say," is the respectful reply. "The two strangers are with Schubert and are on their way here in a carriage; Schubert would never stay away from such a meeting as this, and it's certain, from what Halls overheard, that the three intend to spend their evening together—if only they prove to be the right parties."

"We must find that out at once," Drexel says promptly.

"Yes, sir; but if you will allow me to suggest—"

"Go on."

"I was about to say that I think I can find out who the speakers are to be, by making my way over to the place where you see those colored lights. If Schubert is to be one of the speakers I shall then know about where to take you. But—if as some of us fear, this is to be a boisterous meeting, I don't believe Schubert will be one of the speakers."

"Why?"

"Because the man's a born fire-bug and dynamiter. If there's dirty work to be done, Schubert's role will be to go about through the crowd stirring up bad blood, shouting out incendiary doctrine whenever he thinks himself far enough away from the police. That man's dangerous. Shall I locate Schubert, sir?"

"Yes, if you can without too much loss of time. We will wait here."

Almost as he spoke the officer had disappeared in the crowd. Drexel turned to the companion who had joined him first.

"Do you anticipate trouble?" he asked.

"We hardly know, sir; some of the leaders here are rampant fellows, men whose sentiments are enough to cause their arrest if publicly uttered as they may be here to-night. There's been a deal of ugly talk and all sorts of rumors, some threats, too, publicly uttered but not easy to trace home. There's an uneasy feeling among them that are 'inside' and claim to know what's in the wind. That's about all I know, except that there's an unusually large detail of patrolmen on duty here, and others in reserve at the station. I'm sure I hope all will go off in tall talk—there's bound to be that. This would be an ugly place for a riot, so ill-lighted and sort of hemmed in."

Drexel makes no reply. He is watching the constantly growing crowd and thinking shudderingly of those packages carried by his two unsuspecting friends, at the behest of the "council."

"See," says the other after a time, "they are crowding over that way, toward those high steps and the carts there and, yes, some of the speakers are gathering there now. Jupiter!" as the noise increased and the crowd surged toward the place that he had indicated, "look at

them! they're a tough crowd. What per cent. of American citizens will you find there, do you think?"

"The class of 'American citizens' which keeps you and your fellows busy, and gives you most trouble, will be fairly well represented I fancy," replies Drexel.

"Right you are," said the officer, quickly adding, "and yet these fellows are here, they say, 'in the interest of the down-trodden workingman'—"

"Hush!" said Drexel, and the speaker turns to see his brother officer close beside him.

"Come," says the latter, and turns at once and begins to force his way through the edge of the crowd closely followed by the other two. Somebody is speaking to such as came to listen, standing upon the steps of a corner building; but he is not a star of magnitude, and, except for a small circle near him, is quite unheeded, the clamor growing in volume all about them. The three men have made their way around the crowd until they have skirted it on three sides and are now upon its western border and are near the place where the street becomes narrow. Here the leader pauses and says:

"They came in a carriage, as I thought they would, and down that street," pointing down a side street—"they have driven down that way"—pointing down a diverging street, "and northward, and the carriage was surrounded in a moment by a dozen or more men who seemed to be waiting. They seemed likely from their movements to stop there long enough to settle some question which evidently interested them, and so I came for you;" he moved away a few paces and spoke to a policeman standing at his post.

"That carriage there still?" the officer nodded and the scout beckoned to his companions. "Come," he said "now is your chance. You can have a look at them, at least. We can't get very close yet."

"Let me see them," said Drexel, "and the rest must hap as it will."

A little elbowing and pushing and they came out into more open space and turning the corner saw just beyond and so near a gas lamp as to seem really conspicuous an open carriage in which sat four men. There was a crowd about it and Drexel who now assumed the leadership, saw at once that to approach within speaking distance would be quite impossible.

"Let us pass slowly," he said, and they moved on.

Drexel went by the carriage without a sign of interest on his face but he stopped short a little beyond in the shadow.

"You were right," he said to the officer who had played the scout, "those are the men!" There was silence a moment and then he added: "And now gentlemen, I am going to trust you as I have been assured that I can. Those two young men are dupes, sent here by their superiors. They are the bearers of packages which they have been told, contain revolutionary pamphlets to be distributed among these people but which I fully believe, really contain dynamite bombs, manufactured by a pair of old Russian nihilists. Those who sent these young men, mean that they shall not return to New York. There is an ugly plot behind all this, but of that I can say no more. I am here to save those two men and to prevent, if possible, the use of the dynamite; shall I have your help?"

"We are at your service, Mr. Hurst," said the spokesman for the two. A few minutes after they have scattered and are mingling with the crowd near the carriage.

And now the men about the carriage move a little away just enough to allow the horses to go forward at a slow pace, and it proceeds slowly, surrounded by its hedging escort, until it has rounded the corner and halts

again, this time in the shadow and well into the throng as possible. As before, the press about the carriage is impenetrable.

And now a little aloof, but where they can plainly see the vehicle, the three men draw together again.

"Well," says Drexel, hastily, "what have you discovered?"

"I think those fellows are acting in concert in surrounding the carriage in that manner. They want to prevent the young fellows from escaping."

"Or to keep some one, an officer perhaps, from approaching them," hazards number two.

"Or both," adds Drexel. "Is that all?"

"No," says number two, "I got near enough to see that they had in the carriage two valises of medium size; perhaps it is them that they are so anxious to guard."

"If I could get those valises into my possession," says Drexel, "this meeting might go on as it would." And then the three draw aside again while he gives his final instructions.

They are to separate, mingle with the crowd, and strive each as he best can, to get within speaking distance of the two young men.

"Half a dozen words will be sufficient," Drexel assures them, and then he whispers to each the potent words, adding, "they will understand and give or allow you to take those dangerous valises," and so they separate.

Who of all the vast throng can tell the complete story of that fateful night. How under the lash of fiery tongues, the swaying crowds were aroused and urged on. How enthusiasm became aggressive, oaths and threats, cheers, groans and hisses being mingled.

And still those serpent-tongued apostles of revolution, those disciples of the gospel of intimidation and force lashed the air with plausible sophistry and roused that

mass of humanity to uproariousness until order is no more, the law is openly defied, and for the first time in a free country, anarchy openly shows its teeth; and now these orators, whose trade is anarchy, may cease from their labors. They have wrought the mass before and about them into a brawling, insubordinate mob, no longer to be restrained by voice or peaceful measures. It surges and breathes defiance, and menaces the gallant sons of the city who have responded to a call for protection, for the vindication of outraged and insulted law and order.

"*In the name of the law I command you to disperse.*"

No need to repeat the history of the Haymarket slaughter. It has been written in blood, upon the field, in the hospital, on the scaffold!

While the roar of the death-dealing missiles still echoed in their ears, and the groans and shrieks of the injured still rent the air, a gallant deed, unseen and unrecorded, was enacted, in the midst of the fire and blood and disaster all around.

Savareis and Hosmer had been so closely surrounded as to render approach impossible, but a little before the explosion, they had descended from their carriage, and with the mysterious valises in hand, and closely guarded, had been conducted through the edge of the crowd, until they had reached a position near the place where the main body of police had finally formed.

Just how it came about may never be known, but at the instant of the explosion, Savareis and Hosmer stood for the first time alone. A moment before, Drexel, watching not far away, had seen a stir about his two friends; there seemed to be a discussion and an argument. Then a swift movement, a pushing and crowding, a changing of places, and a closer pressing about the two young men. Then the crowd opened suddenly

at one point, and a man, bearing one of the two valises, dashed through and out of sight.

Instantly, before the crowd could close up again, Drexel had hurled himself among them. He had a glimpse of Rene and Hosmer standing together, and he called to them over the heads about him. Then there was another surging of the crowd. He saw a man leap toward the two and strive to wrest the valise from their hands, saw their resistance and had a glimpse of an arm shooting out, of the assailant reeling. In the same instant he realized that the crowd was thinning, and he reached the side of his friends just as that awful explosion roared out above the yells of the leaders, the commands of the officers, and the babel of the mob.

What had happened?

When Roger Drexel was able to pause and consider, after what seemed an age of violent breathless action, this is what he could recall: As the crowd fell away from Hosmer and Savareis, he had bounded toward them and the two detectives were equally prompt. Then there had come a moment of chaos, that shower of missiles. He had seen Rene Savareis with the valise clutched in his hand, reel, struck by a flying something, had shouted out a command, and snatched away the fatal valise as Savareis went down.

Then—for long afterwards Drexel shuddered, brave man though he was, at the thought of the horror that followed. With the flying fire all around him, and that bag of death-dealing bombs in his hand, he dashed away, bearing at deadliest risk, the missiles of destruction, out of the way of the fiery fragments. On he went with his burden, no one heeding him now, until he was away beyond the outskirts of the panic-stricken mob. And then he paused to look about him. Just beyond was a cottage, dark and seemingly tenant-

less. He lost no time in putting his unsafe burden carefully on the inside of the cottage fence, in the corner farthest from the gate. Then he was back again, and somehow found himself once more beside Rene Savareis, who had been carried out of the street and was being supported by Hosmer and one of the detectives.

Then came the hideous moments of helpless waiting until a carriage had been secured by the absent detective and brought as near as possible. They carried their insensible burden to the waiting vehicle and there Drexel left them, stealing back to the place where he had deposited the bombs. Securing them he never paused until they were safely locked in his own room, at the hotel where he had bidden them carry Savareis.

Ah! the blood that flowed that night! The sighs and groans, the suffering and sorrow and loss that followed that foul deed! The dawn broke upon a city in mourning for her brave guardians of the peace, her gallant policemen dead and dying.

In the morning, Rene Savareis lay between life and death, with more to fear than to hope for. And it was found that one of the detectives received an ugly wound upon the head.

When Drexel opened the valise, which he did by carefully cutting off the leather, he found, as he had expected, half a dozen large bombs of the most deadly and destructive sort, the work of an expert.

What had become of the others, that had been wrested from the hands of Savareis and Hosmer in the crowd? Was it one or more of these that had dealt out death and terror there in the Haymarket? And were these others perhaps reserved for some future occasion? No one ever knew, although, not long after, some bombs were found in the home of an arrested anarchist. In the absence of positive knolwedge Roger Drexel kept his

own counsel. He turned over the bombs in his own possession to the two detectives who had aided him so efficiently, first showing Kenneth Hosmer the manner of 'document' he had been carrying about, and before another night had fallen was on his way back to New York, leaving Rene Savareis still unconscious, and with little hope for his recovery, but watched over by Hosmer, and secure of all that human skill could do to hold him back from the open jaws of death. Other lives were menaced perhaps. Others were helpless and in need of him. And so, wan and sleepless, he turns his face to the east and to Moina.

CHAPTER LXXIII

TO THE RESCUE

When Little Norton had left Madeline at the corner where Crashaw and Passauf had parted company, and set out in pursuit of the latter, it was not without some uneasiness. He feared for her, for he recognized the fact that she, and not himself, was now shadowing the chief conspirator. But his task was plain before him, and he followed Passauf, easily eluding his watchfulness and keeping him plainly in sight and at close range.

He traced him home and then went to Minna's home. Madeline's abrupt departure had not been a surprise to Minna but when she did not return at noon she began to feel anxious. She went to the window and placed therein a potted geranium bearing a single scarlet blossom, the prearranged signal by which to summon Little Norton from the street at need.

He had been at his post for some time, and came promptly, but he was unable to help her, and what he had to say only increased her anxiety. As for himself Little Norton was strangely uneasy and provokingly at a loss.

As evening approached Minna again put out her signal; this time it was answered by the boy Toole, who had been prevailed upon to leave his post at the deserted house on B— Street, and relieve Norton in the little court.

Toole explained the situation in his own peculiar way. "I've been on the watch in another place," he began. "I guess you were!"

"Yes; B— Street."

"Yes'm; but Little Norton says I'm watching an empty house. And I had made up my mind to that myself. But all the same I'd a stuck to biz till I was called off if Little Nort. hadn't made me see that I'd been doin' more good by turning to and helping him out. He said he'd be responserbull."

But Minna was in haste.

If the little man comes back before I do, tell him this: "I'm going to the Occidental, where Miss Payne boards, and see if she is there, and I shall go and come as fast as I can."

And this she did. After visiting Madeline's apartments, and being assured that she was not there, tapped at another door and was ushered into the presence of the Princess Sacha.

But the lady could tell her nothing, and was pained and startled at what Minna had to relate. And poor Minna hastened back to her post, more anxious and apprehensive than before, leaving a new fear to weigh down the already heavy heart of the princess.

Madam Orloff was better. She had rallied somewhat, and had been placed under the care of a skilled nurse, having grown strangely docile in the hands of Dr. Vaughan, and the princess was left with time to think and to wonder.

Taken by itself, the absence of such a woman as Madeline Payne would not, could not, be a thing to alarm her, but the fact that Madeline had set out to follow up, what she believed to be a clue to the whereabouts of Moina La Croix, and that she had neither returned or communicated with her friends was cause sufficient for uneasiness.

What could she do? What could she do? She had put all power, all authority out of her hands, and she did

not even know how or where to communicate with Dissett. He might yet be found at his lodgings, perhaps, but she dared not send a messenger, and how could she go herself?

At eight o'clock Dr. Vaughan came. All day he had been searching for news of Drexel, in obedience to Madeline's instructions, had held himself reluctantly aloof from the place where he had supposed her to be.

What the princess had to tell drove the blood from his face.

"I shall go there at once," he said.

"I was sure you would," she cried; "I could hardly wait for your coming. I have never felt more helpless. And you will come back to me at once?"

"As quickly as possible, for I must see my patient again to-night."

He saw the fever in her cheeks and the look of strained anxiety in her eyes, and, without understanding such extreme solicitude, sympathized with it.

It was a long drive, but at half-past nine he was back.

His face told its own story. There was no news of Madeline. And the two sat down opposite each other to discuss the strange situation, and evolve, if possible, some hopeful plan of action.

As they talked they came to a better understanding, but nothing helpful came of it all until, at last, the princess arose with a look of one suddenly resolved upon something unpleasant.

"One thing I can do," she said, "and I will. I know where I may perhaps find a man who can help us, but I must go to him. He would not come perhaps, if I were to send. I must ask your escort, and will you call a carriage at once?"

Wondering, but compliant and unquestioning he

went. As he handed her into the carriage a distant clock struck ten.

Almost in silence they drove to the quiet street where, not many days before, she had sought out Dissett in his den. Arrived at the entrance she left him at the carriage door and entered alone. Again the woman met her almost at the entrance attracted hither by the sound of the carriage without. But this time she did not mount the stairs, for the rooms above were tenantless. Dissett had gone.

When they were again in the carriage the princess said, after a few moments of pondering:

"I can see but one thing to be done, that is for you to go directly to the place where Miss Payne left this morning. If she returns she will come there. If she needs help she will send there."

"You are right," he said quickly. "Under the circumstances I think I may ignore her commands to remain aloof. I will go at once."

It was nearing midnight when Roger Drexel arrived in the city, weary and travel worn, but animated and stimulated by his thoughts of Moina, his anxieties, and hopes and fears.

He longed to fly, first and fast, to the place where he had parted with her, and where he supposed her still to be. But prudence, and a sense of duty alike forbade. To approach the La Croix' without some knowledge of what had occurred during his absence would be a blunder, perhaps a risk. And he must run no risk where Moina was concerned. But, late as it was, he could not be inactive. The princess would receive him, and it was to her he must get information; to her and Madeline.

And so it was the princess received his card from the

hands of the night porter, and, five minutes afterward, she was pouring into his ear the story of the double disappearance. An hour later Drexel met Norton.

"Norton, you're the man I want," said Drexel. "What can you tell me? I have just heard that Miss La Croix and Miss Payne are both missing."

"You had better join me, Hurst. I am shadowing Jules Passauf, I think, I am quite sure that he will lead us to the La Croix."

"What is he doing here?"

"I don't know. He came with a little old man, a stranger—queer but well dressed. They entered the cafe together."

"I will go with you," said Drexel.

CHAPTER LXXIV

AT THE LAST MOMENT

When Madeline recovered consciousness, she found that she had been carried back to the rear room and placed upon the couch, and she opened her eyes to see Moina and the old woman bending over her.

She was kept a close prisoner all that day with the La Croix's. From the conversation of her jailers she learned that they were determined to kill them all. "Moina," she says, toward evening when all were aware of their fate "all may soon be over. Be courageous. Mr. La Croix, you are a brave man. They threaten our lives; mine first, then yours. See! I have secured this door in the only way possible, but it can be broken down easily. And I have this for further defense," holding up the dagger.

Madeline was as pale as Moina now; but both were calm. Brave blood flowed in these girlish veins.

"And I," said Moina, "have this bar, papa."

"They are whispering together," said Madeline, with her ear against the door.

"Open that door," called the voice of the woman.

And Mr. La Croix answered: "We know your plots. We are aware that it is useless to ask for mercy. But I would make terms with you."

"What terms?"

"Let these two young women go from this place free and unhurt, and they pledge themselves not to denounce you. Do this, and I will stay here, to be used as you will."

"Never, papa!" cried Moina.

"Never!" cried Madeline's clear voice. And then ensued one of the strongest of dialogues, the prisoners vieing with each other in plans of self-sacrifice and the jailers, knowing themselves committed growing more and more brutal—the Spider because such was his nature, and the woman warming to her role as the contents of the flask diminished.

After this talk there was another silence, then a sound from the little store-room.

"Ah!" whispered Madeline, "they are going to batter down the door. At least let us strike one blow."

Mr. La Croix had armed himself with a slat from the bed but he had little strength to wield it. And with a groan of anguish he saw the two brave girls prepare for the struggle. Already they had called loudly for help and now as the shuffle of feet told of the approach of the enemy, Moina sprang upon the chair.

Thump! Crash! Three times the great block of wood was dashed against the door which, strengthened by the table behind it, resisted. But at every thump a pane of glass came jingling down from the window and standing with her head at the opening just made, Moina sent her voice ringing through the night:

"Help! Help! Help!"

"Quick Moina, they are coming again; stand close to the wall and hold your bar ready for a blow. Don't get before the door. If they throw themselves against the door with great force and the door gives way suddenly, as I think it will, one of them may lose his balance. If I could get one of them under my knife—"

"Quick!" echoed Miles La Croix excitedly; "careful, my darling, it is a chance. God help you! God help you! One more appeal to man, children, then turn to God."

Once again both voices blend in a loud cry:

"Help! Help! Help!"

Outside the battery is ready for a final assault; in the middle of the room stands the old woman and the Spider. In front of them, horizontally held, is a huge block of wood and both of the steady arms are strained to hold it at the best height.

"Aim here," said the Spider, indicating upon the door, and then stepping back to his place beside her. "One more blow must bring it down. Now remember, don't get in my way. I shall let go as soon as the ram strikes."

On a chair close beside the door lies his pistol and that belonging to the woman is similarly placed opposite.

"Throw all your force into the blow. That's your part. I'll look out for the shooting," says the Spider.

"Shall you shoot them?"

"Instantly. It's too late for trifling. Now get ready; one, two, three!"

The door already is weakened, the bolt is shattered, the hinges half gone, the panels split and splintered.

As they stand ready, the two girls send out their last cry for aid:

"Help! Help! Help!"

The two demons poise their battering ram—

A white haired man lifts clasped hands aloft, "O God the Helper, God the Saviour, have mercy, have pity."

"Once more and it is done," says the Spider.

There is a forward rush, a cry, a blow, a pistol shot. Then cries that come neither from the besiegers nor beseiged; a voice outside the window, crashing of glass and splintering of wood, and above it all, agonized, intense, a voice calling:

"Moina! Moina!" And over and through all else floats the answer back, "Here! Here! I am here!"

The bar of iron drops from Moina's hands and she

falls senseless. As nearly as it could be told, this is what happened:

Faithful to the Spider's suggestion, the woman Katherine had dashed herself and the block of wood against the fated door with force and fury. It went inward with a sudden crash and so great was the woman's momentum, she was carried forward and prostrated face downward. It was all done in an instant, but in that instant Madeline Payne had hurled herself upon her and was standing over her with uplifted knife.

"Dare to come one step nearer, and I plunge your knife into this woman's body!"

The Spider caught up his pistol and in spite of her words, he thrust his arm through the door-way and pulled the trigger. But his aim went far amiss, for Moina standing close against the wall with upraised bar had brought it down upon his wrist, and the wretch sprang back with a yell, rushed toward the outer room, and straight into the arms of—Little Norton.

And so it was when Drexel and Dr. Vaughan burst into that dingy kitchen, their eyes were greeted with a strange tableau. Madeline standing pallid and stern above the prostrate woman, with the dagger poised in her hand; Miles La Croix, still sustained by the excitement of the hour but speechless from contending emotion, and Moina so still and white that Drexel cried out in terror and was instantly at her side gathering her in his arms. At the same moment Dr. Vaughan half lifted the fallen Katerine and, consigning her to the man behind him, turned to Madeline with outstretched hands. Letting the knife fall as it would, she placed her own within them, swaying as about to fall. He threw an arm about her, and held her while he looked deep into her eyes.

"Madeline Payne," he cried, "I have been well nigh mad this night! Tell me are you unhurt! Have these

brutes treated you ill? What is the meaning of this horrible scene?"

A great sob rises in her throat, there is no more need for courage and Madeline becomes a very woman.

"Oh!" she cries, "if you had been ten minutes later you might now be looking upon my dead face. They were about to murder us."

"You! Oh, my darling, my darling! Curse them, curse them all!" cries this staid, self-controlled doctor, holding her closer still, as if to do so was a matter of course.

When Moina's eyes open, she finds her lover bending over her.

"Oh, Fernand," she sighs, "is it all over—the danger, and horror; will you take us away?"

"At once, my beloved. The troubles are at an end. We have only to make your father well once more, and to be happy together."

CHAPTER LXXV

A CLEARER ATMOSPHERE

How did it come about, this opportune rescue?

In order to insure prompt obedience to his commands, Dissett had kept Passauf company upon his errand to the princess who had luckily arrived after her fruitless search for Dissett just in time to receive his messenger.

"I shall wait for you outside," said Passauf's stern master. "I know what she will do when she gets that message, and you and I do not leave this house until I see the proof that she has been told the truth. This is your last chance."

But Passauf was already conquered. Without this precaution he would have told the truth to madam la princess.

That Dissett understood the princess was speedily proved.

She came sweeping down to the parlor almost as their retreating heels rang hastily, and ordered the best driver and fastest horse to be had, "instantly."

"I knew it," said Dissett when they had watched her drive away. "Come. You are to do me one more favor, and then we part."

"What is it?"

"Only to return to the room of your friend M. Crashaw and bring down to me something you will find there."

Outwardly calm, though he was, Dissett was inwardly chafing. In the excitement of the awful last moments

in Crashaw's room, little wonder he had gone away and forgotten to take with him the death-dealing cigars. Now he had but one thought, to get them back and quickly. Passauf was past remonstrance. They hastened on unconscious that not far behind them two keen detectives were running them down. When they arrived at the place, Dissett stopped in the shadow near the entrance.

"Go up," he said. "You will find two small foreign-looking cigars upon the table under the lamp. Bring them to me, and no matter what else you find there come away at once and quietly."

Sullen and wondering, Passauf entered the building and Dissett stood motionless in the shadow; a little further on two other still figures watched, as keenly as he, the lighted door of entrance. "We're all right," Little Norton whispered; "I know this place. It's furnished rooms and has no other entrance, being semi-respectable."

The five minutes had not expired when a figure darted out of the door-way and joined Dissett.

"Well?" said the latter.

For a moment there was silence between them; then—

"Did you know what I should find there?" hissed Passauf.

"What did you find?" coldly.

"A dead man."

"Heart disease?"

"I have keen eyes. On the table directly before him was the mark of a dagger point."

Dissett put his hand to his pocket and drew it out with something shut within its grasp.

"Move a little nearer the light," he said.

For answer Passauf produced a match and lighted it.

"That will do. Now look!" He opened his hand and Passauf saw with starting eyes the tiny hemisphere

which the princess had placed before M. Lugas at their last meeting. "Do you understand now?"

"Yes," submissively.

"You knew me years ago, Jules Passauf. That man caused the death of my brother and my dearest friend; still had it not been for my oath I doubt if this hand could have taken his life."

"Then he too, was condemned?"

"Yes; and now the cigars?"

Passauf started. "They were not there," he said.

"Not there?"

"No. It was in peering about for them that I found the dagger mark. Stop; I think I know who took them!"

"Do you mean—"

"Lugas. He is certain to pounce upon a fine cigar. Shall we try to get them from him?"

"No, Passauf; there is a fate in it. Did he take aught else?"

"Yes; he rifled Crashaw's pockets and took certain papers; bank certificates—"

"Belonging to the order?"

"Yes. Am I dismissed?"

For a moment Dissett seemed to have forgotten him. Then he said: "Go; and remember to-morrow midday must find you out of the city."

And as Passauf turned and moved away he added, "As I shall be; as I shall be."

Passauf moved away slowly, like one undecided as to his destination, and before Dissett had stirred from his place, two forms sprang past him, and he saw the taller of the two place a hand upon Passauf's shoulder. There was a moment's parley, and venturing a little nearer, he heard one of the strangers say:

"That is all we ask of you. If you wish to leave the city in the morning you had better not refuse."

"Come then," said Passauf and the three set off across the street. "Going to take a cab," murmured Dissett. And he too sought the cab-stand.

The hand upon his shoulder had not startled Passauf. He had taken it for that of Dissett but the voice that spoke close to his ear had electrified him.

He recognized it, and ejaculated feebly:

"Makofski!"

"Makofski no longer. I am Hurst the detective, and I arrest you in the name of the law. I give you a chance between sleeping in jail to night, or sleeping in a com fortable bed. You know where Miles La Croix and his daughter have been concealed. Lead us to them, or go to prison."

Passauf was growing desperate, but he assented. The reader knows the result.

Why linger over what followed that happy rescue.

The Spider and Katerine were led to jail.

As Norton emerged from the alley what was his surprise to see two men turn away from the carriage window. With a bound he was beside the carriage.

"Madam, those men—"

"Are both known to me, sir," said the princess with a touch of haughtiness, and with this he was obliged to be satisfied.

In that brief interval of waiting the Princess Sacha Orloff and Mr. Dissett had met for the last time on earth.

While the princess looked and listened at the carriage window, two men approached, and the foremost doffing his hat uttered her name.

Turning quickly she recognized Jules Passauf. The other stood in the shadow as if to avoid recognition.

"Passauf! What does this mean? You have followed us here!"

"True, madam," he spoke like one reciting a none too well-learned lesson. "I bring you a message from Mr. Dissett. Knowing your wishes he bids me inform you that your friends are now safe, and that Mr. Hurst and his friends will do well and perhaps avoid an unpleasant complication if they remain away from M. Lugas and M. Crashaw and make no further move until you hear from or of them. That your mind may be at ease, he bids me tell you that before you received the talisman these two had been condemned. Adieu."

He moved back a pace and then spoke again. "Madam, put out your hand. Here is something no other must receive."

She put out her gloved hand. Another hovered over it an instant and then pressed something down upon the palm. Then without a word the two figures vanished in the darkness.

"Strange!" spoke the princess.

"Madam," called Minna, "how odd! It was the little man who hung back and never spoke, that put that thing in your hand."

Bending to examine the package the princess found that it was the talisman.

In the small hours of the morning a strange party arrived at the Occidental. And there Drexel told his story.

He told of his meeting with Moina, in Madeline's parlor; he had seen the spy in butternut, and both had followed her home. And then he took up the story of Mr. Lord's experiences with the knife and the letters. Then came the tale of the dynamite bomb, Mr. Lord's illness, the search for the flower boy, and the finding of little Frank Price. He told of his alliance with Madeline, and of their growing surprise, and how by degrees they had connected Crashaw, Savareis and La Croix with the circle.

Then having permission from the princess, he connected her with the story.

Link by link he wove the chain. The chance finding of Joesph Parker, the setting of Johnny Deegan on the trail of little Hans, the illness of Frank Price and his pitiful story. How he had written to foreign detectives and others; what he had learned from them, and how at last he had bearded the lion in his den, and as Fernand Makofski, made himself one of their household.

"Oh," she cried, "I understand now. They suspected you then. That is why you left the packet in my care that night when you went to see the princess!"

"That night" he said "I made my famous bargain with the princess, and convinced myself that she was one of the foreign circle. But how did you know of this—"

She blushed rosily and dropped her eyes. "From papa," she said, "in his sleep." And then she clasped his arm. "Oh, what danger you were in!"

"My anxiety was as great as my danger, Moina, for until that night of our encounter in your father's study I was not certain of you. I feared that you were in sympathy with the circle."

"Ah," she sighed, "those horrible days! I began to understand the wickedness on foot when papa commenced to ramble in his sleep. And I tried to do what I could. Once I wrote a letter of warning to Mr. Lord and for fear that Madeline might see it and know the writing, I made Margot pen the address. And then I overheard a talk between Crashaw and papa, and so I knew that more mischief was to be done. I heard the names of two who were to be injured in some way, and fearing that I had not got them right, I went that night to the study to look for them on the list of 'enemies to the cause,' the black list."

"And they owe to you the safety of their property, perhaps their lives. While I—oh, Moina, that night when I stood one against five, you saved me. Moina there is one thing that I cannot yet fully understand. Why were you so horribly afraid of Crashaw. It was something concerning Mr. Lord."

"I knew so well that he was threatened and I was determined to thwart them. One night I heard papa rave about Mr. Lord. 'I will be the one to go,' he said. 'That business must end.' The next night he went out alone and returned very late, and talked of 'seeing Mr. Lord,' of 'secret and safe.' The next day came the news of the murder of that poor footman. That was Crashaw's chance. He frightened me into consenting to leave B— Street. I can't understand it yet. But I have thought and prayed, and I know, I knew even before you accused that evil old man of the crimes, that it was not papa. Yet I feared that they might lay it upon him. And that would have been his death, with such health as his."

"My poor darling, your father went there, I do not know why, and Crashaw followed him. Mr. Lord was away, as you know, and Crashaw knew too well who killed the footman. Ah, if we had but understood each other! I entered your B— Street house in disguise to serve you as well as others. I too, had taken means to warn those victims. It was to learn the circle's secrets that I came among them, and I was not long in learning that your father was their tool, their victim. I could easily have arrested them but for your father. It was to save him that I strove. He is safe now, my darling, and health will return soon, let us hope."

She put her hand upon his. "Sorrow has cleared my vision, my friend. I thank God, papa is himself once more.

But health, strength, he will never have again. I am sure of this."

His answer was a silent caress; he could make no other, for she had repeated, almost word for word, the verdict of Dr. Vaughan.

While these two talked on, Madeline and the princess were coming to a clear understanding. It was Madeline who had sought the interview and she plunged into the subject at once.

"There is something on my mind, dear madam, and I cannot go on like this, accepting your confidences and trusted by you until you have heard the truth. Madam, I came here, into this house, because you were here, and at the request of Mr. Hurst."

"You! Are you a detective, and not Miss Payne?"

"I am Madeline Payne. Whether I am worthy to be called a detective, you may decide." And she dashed the history of her connection with the war upon the circle, beginning with her meeting with Moina and the others on the ocean, passing from that to Mr. Lord's confidences, and following up the narrative, from her point of view, ending thus: "There have been times of late, when I have thought that my movements, especially my interest in Moina La Croix, must excite your suspicion. But since your confidence of night before last, which I beg of you to believe was not needed to confirm my belief in and admiration for you, I could see how your own heavy burden of sorrow and suspense must have made you blind to all not closely connected with your own anxieties."

She stopped and both were silent for a space. Then she continued with gentle dignity.

"Dear madam, I have no excuse to offer. What I have done was to serve, perhaps save, a friend. When I began, you were to me only a beautiful mystery. Now you

are a woman whom I esteem, admire and long to call my friend."

The princess had listened to her story at first with simple surprise, then with growing hauteur. At the end her face was turned away, and she sat thus for many moments. Then she held out her hand. "After all," she said, "why should I be either angry or surprised? You have done only what I would have done in your place. Where then do we differ? I was in one sense a spy. I have been, in truth, a friend to the cause which Lugas, Crashaw and others like them, so unworthily represent. I came here to report to those in authority in Europe, the movements of their representatives here. But as you know it was not patriotism alone which prompted me. Under cover of this I hoped to find trace of—you know whom; and you know that my work here is done."

"But you will not leave us? Not yet?"

"If Madam Petralowski lives and desires to go back, I shall take her. If she dies and is buried here, I shall remain—all my days, perhaps. In any case I have done with the 'cause,' there or here."

CHAPTER LXXVI

FAIR HARBOR

When Dissett's strange message had been made known to them by the princess, they decided to follow his advice to the letter, but she did not make them acquainted with the sentence concerning the verdict of condemnation.

That evening's papers contained a paragraph which sent Drexel at once to the princess. "Let me read you something," he said, and unfolded a copy of the *Bee*.

"SUDDEN DEATH.—SUICIDE OR HEART DISEASÉ, WHICH?"

"At or near noon to-day, the care-taker of the rooms in Bassett's Block, K— Street, entered that occupied by a Mr. Rufus Crashaw, an Englishman of means, and found him dead in his chair. There were no signs of violence. The dead man sat in an easy-chair with his head lying forward on the table. He had not been robbed and the room was in perfect order."

Then followed a string of suggestions, possibilities and absurdities. Drexel did not stop to read these, but asked sharply:

"Do you understand this?"

"Yes: but, so help me heaven, it is unexpected. I may tell you all now. The last words spoken by Jules Passauf, last night, were these—" Someone knocked hastily at the outer door and a servant entered.

"Madam, a Sister of Mercy." She stepped back and made way for a sad-faced Sister.

"Is this madam the princess?"

The lady bowed.

"Madam, Jules Passauf believes himself dying. In trying to leave the city he was waylaid, and was taken up in the early morning, for dead. He wishes to see you, to tell you something. He begs you to come at once."

"Will you go with me?" asked the princess, turning to Drexel.

He bowed assent.

Jules Passauf's days were numbered, and he told his story between groans and gasps for breath—told of his dealings with Dissett from the first; of his visit to Crashaw, of the dagger left in Lugas' room, of the second visit to Crashaw's room, the finding of the dead man, the absence of the poisoned cigars; of how Dissett had followed him when led away by Drexel and Norton, and how he had escaped from one to fall into the hands of the other. Then of how they had followed the carriage of the princess. "It was Dissett," he said, "who put the talisman into your hand, though he would not speak. He would not trust it to me in the darkness."

"Passauf," the princess bent over him and spoke low, "did he tell you why these men were condemned?"

"Only this—some one wrote to Sharlan telling him how Miles La Croix had been put forward and how behind him they were plotting for personal gain and personal revenge. Letters were exchanged; then they commissioned Dissett to put their authority into your hands and to see to it that they two received extreme penalty. He was to do with me as he chose."

He looked from one to the other. "Is Lugas—dead?" he whispered; "if he leaves a cigar, it may be somebody's death."

Drexel and the princess exchanged glances. "I must see to this," he said.

Little could be done for Passauf; and when that was done, they hastened away. In the carriage, Drexel said:

"So my letters to Sharlan bore bloody fruit. At a time when I felt that being one against many I must use every weapon at hand, I wrote to Sharlan, hoping little from it, but giving an address. He replied, and I wrote again. I told the simple truth, dwelling most on the use they seemed to be making of Miles La Croix, and detailing certain financial crooked ways. In my last, just after Harvey's murder, I told him two men had lost their lives through reckless blundering. Has Dissett left the city?"

"I begin to understand that man," she said; "he will never be seen here or in England again. He has lived for years hungering for revenge. Living or dead, we have seen him for the last time. I felt it when I found in the package which he placed in my hand, his withdrawal from the circle, his farewell to it."

An hour later two men dressed as policemen entered the office of Lugas' hotel, a small and quiet place, and asked for Dr. Lugas. Dr. Lugas had not been seen that day but that was not unusual. He often took his meals elsewhere.

"Our business is urgent," said the spokesman of the two. "Show us his room."

There was no answer to their repeated knocks and one of them bent to the key-hole.

"The key is inside," he said; "give us a chair." He mounted upon a chair, looked through the glass of the transom and sprang hastily down. "Break in the door!" he exclaimed; "he's dead."

A moment later and the door went crashing in. In the table stood the dagger, upright still, and newly set

a-quivering. Upon the floor, the face upturned, distorted and hideous, lay Lugas. No second glance was needed to show that he was dead.

"Quick," said the first officer, "go call a doctor, or some one."

Out dashed the clerk and down upon his knees went one of the officers beside the stiffened form, and never did robber swifter searching against time, while the other watched at the door.

"Thank heaven!" ejaculated the searcher, "some man's life is saved!" and he held up the poisoned cigar.

Soon the room was filled with horror-stricken people, and the two officers withdrew. Their work was done.

"We will be called as witnesses, Mr. Hurst," said Bates; for these two officers were Bates and Drexel.

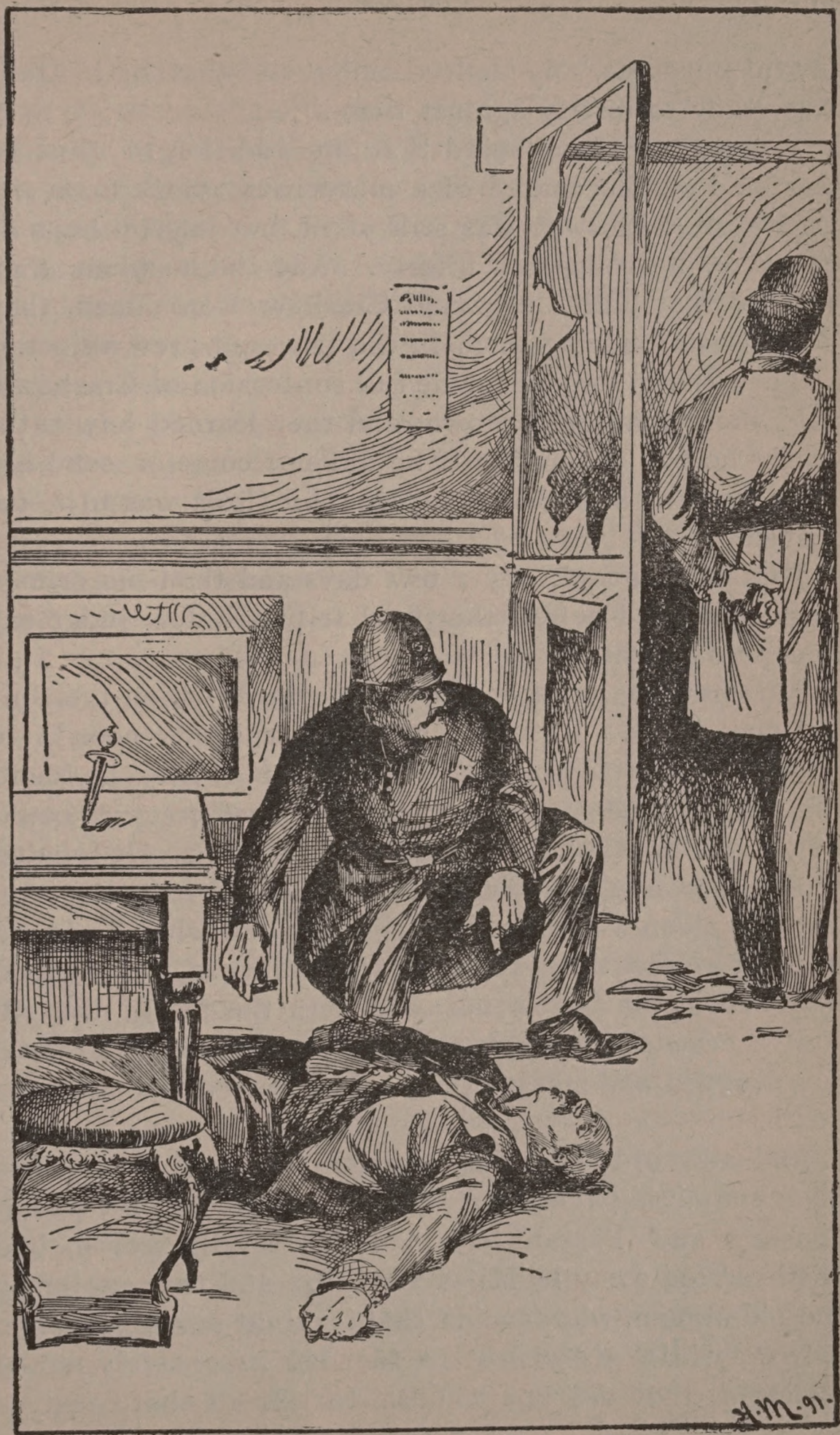
"It can't be helped, Bates. It was a desperate case and there was no other or safer way. We will appear and tell what we can."

"And shall you call yourself Hurst? No one would know you with that face."

"No, I shall call myself Roger, it's a part of my name, and I don't think anyone will know me."

And so it came about that at the inquest, which made a great sensation, more because of the knife than for any other reason, the two officers who gave modest and brief testimony, were described by the reporters as "Officers Roger and Bates."

When Tausig and old Katerine found themselves about to be sent to jail and clamored for a reason therefor—having shrewdly guessed that the names of Miles and Moina La Croix and Madeline Payne would be shielded, if possible—they were struck dumb when told that they were jointly charged with manufacturing "for un-



THE DEATH OF LUGAS.—Moina, p. 514.

lawful purposes," dynamite bombs, and that little Hans was ready to testify against them.

When the Spider heard that in addition to this, he was held on the charge of a murderous attack upon little Frank Price, who was still alive, but beyond hope of recovery, he collapsed utterly. And later when they learned that both Lugas and Crashaw were dead, they saw disaster staring them in the face and grew abject.

Then the old woman made full confession of Crashaw's sins, more than of her own, and they learned how ruthlessly he had planned. If he did not come or send his messenger by half-past ten, Miles La Croix was to be removed.

Passauf lingered only a few days and then his crimes were presented before the final tribunal for judgment and punishment.

This news only deepened the gloom in which the Spider now dwelt. But when a few days later—poor little Frank Price having passed painlessly out of life—he found himself indicted for murder, the wretched creature could no longer face the consequences of his crime. He feigned illness, seeming in great pain, and begged for an opiate. He was given a safe dose of morphia and when he found himself getting drowsy under its influence, he wrapped his head in the bedclothes, and with the aid of the pillow, succeeded in sneaking out of existence, smothered in a drugged and muffled sleep—a vile life and a coward's death.

And now old Katerine played her last card. The book containing the account of the circle, and for which Crashaw and Passauf had made a fruitless search, had been carried away by Miles La Croix and then stolen by the old woman, who fancied that it might prove valuable.

Now, while all wished to see her kept safely out of mischief, they did not choose to tell all that must be

told, in order to secure for her an adequate punishment. And so, after some finesse, they offered her her liberty, and she sunk from sight in her own native element, after giving up that criminating book of records.

Officer Bates and his good wife found ample reasons to bless the Lord when they lent aid to Roger Drexel, and shelter to little Hans, and they gladly consented to give the boy a home, where he grew and thrived as a protege of Drexel.

Johnny Deegan, too, came under his special care. The boy Toole took him into "partnership" as a boy shadow. And Johnny looks forward hopefully to the day when he shall become a detective and deservedly famous.

Joseph Parker had no more cause to regret the failure of his first attempt at assassination. Elias Lord never did things by halves, and when it came to a question of providing for Joseph and his family, he said in his characteristic way:

"Parker is my affair. There is a peculiar bond between myself and Joseph. You've been running everything to your notion, Drexel, but you can't run this. I have bought him a bit of land, and he's going to be a farmer."

The 'bit of land' proved to be a respectable farm, and Joseph, humbled and grateful, turned his back upon the 'unions' and found his troubles over.

The Occidental, as Mr. La Croix grew less of an invalid and the actor in this long drama recovered from fatigue and shock, became the almost daily resort of Phillip and Olive Lord, Elias Lord, Mrs. Ralston, and Lawyer Fallingsbee.

There was so much to tell, so many tangles to unravel. In a time like this conventionalities were set aside, all barriers went down. Miles La Croix and Elias Lord found in each other mutual attractions, and Mrs. Rals-

ton, when once she was permitted to know Madam Petralowski, fell in love with her sweet, sad face, and gentle, deprecating ways. Every day, after the acquaintance began, found her by madam's bedside, welcomed by the invalid, and giving to the princess a chance for much-needed rest.

One morning she left the patient sleeping and sought Doctor Vaughan. "Doctor," she said, "we are between two evils. That poor woman's death may be hastened by telling her the truth; it is being hastened by suspense. Over and over, sleeping and waking, it is the same cry: 'If I only knew! if I only knew!' "

"What! would you tell her—"

"That he is dead. No more than that; not how he died. Talk with her yourself, and then judge."

This he did, and after a sudden change for the worse had convinced him that her life at best was only a matter of days, Mrs. Ralston told her that her son was dead.

"God is good," she murmured. "At last I know I shall go to him, and soon. I can wait now, and I can rest."

And she did, peacefully, in faith and hope, dying at last, just as the May birds were singing their first sweet song.

By that time Miles La Croix was able to stand beside her flower-strewn coffin and pay his tribute to one whose sad story had wrung his heart.

Moina, into whose hands the reins had now fallen, was beginning to talk of looking for a new home, for they would never go back to B— Street, and so it chanced, a few days after they had buried Madam Petralowski, that Moina went to Madeline for advice.

"Moina, let the house wait, dear. I want to talk of the poor princess. I am more than anxious about her,

now that she has nothing to do but grieve. You know that Rene Savareis does not get better as he ought."

"Yes."

Roger Drexel had made a flying visit to Chicago, and had brought back a discouraging report.

"Well, she thinks she ought to go and help Mr. Hosmer take care of him. She feels sure that he is going to die. I know her feelings. And yet she cannot go alone. I wish I could go with her. What shall we do?"

"Let's ask Roger," said loyal Moina, and they did.

One week later Kenneth Hosmer, somewhat pale from watching and confinement, but in every other way a healthier, happier and wiser young man than he whom we first saw less than a year ago, sat beside the bed where lay Rene Savareis, the ghost of his former self.

Hosmer held an open letter in his hand and he glanced up as if from its perusal with a quizzical smile.

"Well, Rene, old fellow, for a sick man who can't or won't raise his hand to his mouth, you have contrived to stir up business for tinkers and tailors, and goodness knows how many more."

"What do you mean?" asked the sick man, with a faint smile.

Hosmer looked at him intently.

"You must rouse him in some way," the doctor had said. "He is going into a decline from simple lack of desire to live."

Hosmer was about to "rouse" him, but he felt more anxious than he dared to show. There was much in that letter that he could not read to Savareis, and what he said was this:

"This letter's from Drexel, and it's deucedly long. I'll cull you the cream of it in my own choice language.

To beign with, a certain fair lady, desiring to come to this city to see--well, say me, felt a doubt about the propriety of coming alone. So she applied to the two fair ladies known as Moina and Madeline, of whom we have heard so much of late. I see you are growing interested."

"Yes—go on."

"Briefly, then, Drexel and Moina are to be married at once. But it is to be a double wedding; for Dr. Vaughan will lead Madeline to the altar at the same time. And, old fellow, note this: Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan are coming to Chicago on their conventional wedding trip and the Princess Sacha will accompany them. We may look for our friends on Friday. Drexel writes me."

There were tears in Savareis' eyes.

"Hosmer," he whispers, "I can get better now. This proves her friendship, and I can live upon that."

"It proves her need of you, Rene. Don't you see how all alone she is. Be her faithful friend now, and trust all the rest to time."

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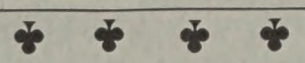

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